

OCTOBER 1954

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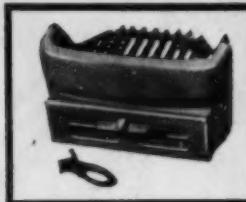
CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL



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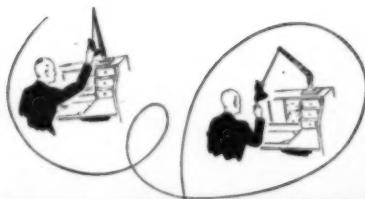
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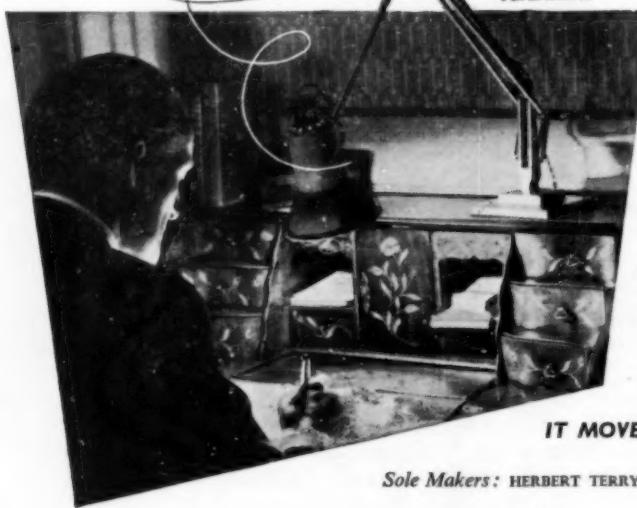
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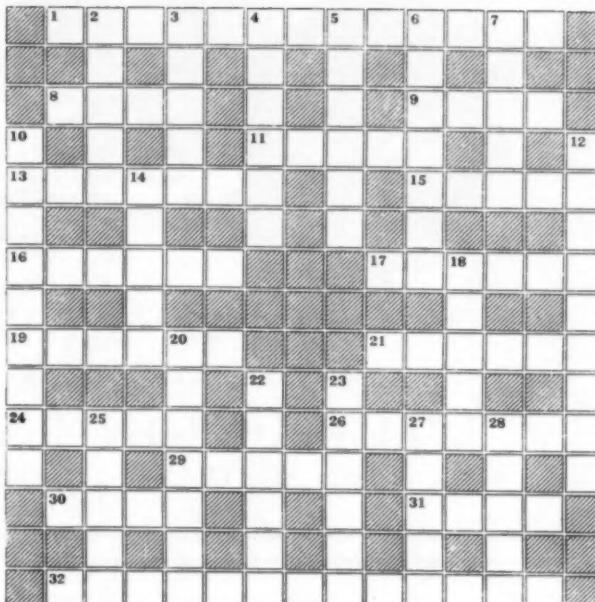
TA388

CHAMBERS'S DICTIONARY

CROSSWORD No. 6

ACROSS

- 1 A virus-like natural agent that destroys bacteria (13).
- 8 To hit straight (4).
- 9 A fish of the cod family (4).
- 11 This jury can be made from a tree (5).
- 13 This means to ease, but rearranged it will annoy the first woman (7).
- 15 A genus of gasteropods; put with 8 across it makes a type of jet engine (5).
- 16 A long narrow cut (6).
- 17 Often opposed to the letter (6).
- 19 Commit matricide? (6).
- 21 'Comes the blind Fury with the abhorred' Milton (6).
- 24 Not acquired (5).
- 26 One might suppose his job was similar to that of the sandman, though more dishonest (7).
- 29 To correct (5).
- 30 The cognomen of one poet rearranged makes part of the name of another (4).
- 31 A shade attached to a lady's hat (4).
- 32 Not to my taste (3, 2, 3, 2, 3).



A. M. MACDONALD

C

DOWN

- 2 'I have seen the lady . . . bringing the daffodils' (Masefield).
- 3 A kind of American Indian tent (5).
- 4 'There is a . . . whose name is Death.'
- 5 A former fruity principality in Holland (6).
- 6 A summit (4, 3).
- 7 A thing beyond hope of recovery (5).
- 10 Ananias would lose his most characteristic quality if he became addicted to this drug (5, 4).
- 12 A steroid effective against rheumatoid arthritis (9).

- 14 Add one to an electrically charged particle and get a Scottish island; insert another one and get an ancient coastal district of Asia Minor (5).
- 18 Disinclined to move or act (5).
- 20 Temporary (7).
- 22 Of the nature of vinegar (6).
- 23 This does not belong to a teaset (3, 3).
- 25 A Negro patois in Louisiana, etc. (5).
- 27 In Shakespeare 'to take it in . . . ' meant to take offence.
- 28 A confused conflict (5).

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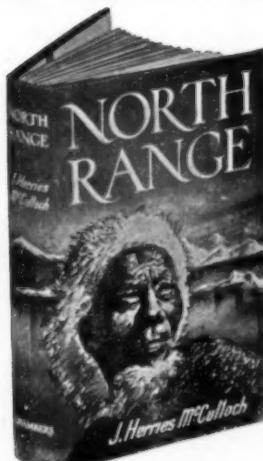


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'From that rich stratum of Edinburgh society came the snobbery for

which the modern city is famous. True, the development of socialism and the high taxation of unearned incomes have made the snobbery less flamboyant and assertive, but it dies hard, and may be seen in artistic circles, at the theatres during the Festival season, and in clubs. It has more facets, and far more cutting edges than the blunt, bowler-hatted commercial snobbery of Glasgow. It is one of the features of Edinburgh which you can depend on, and only a gullible fool would take chances with it. It can be more chilling than the East Wind that comes up from the Firth of Forth.'

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The Well

JOHAN FABRICIUS

HE was big and bony, with a head that looked as if it had been carved from dark wood, a powerful Semitic nose, and deep-set, gleaming black eyes—a typical man from the Hadhramaut. Round his white woollen fez he wore a lemon-yellow turban with a fringe. Under his sarong of chequered silk could be glimpsed thick, dirty ankles and a pair of broad, flat, desert-treading feet in open sandals. His muscular fist grasped, like the talons of a bird, the round handle of an umbrella. He never went out without that umbrella, the symbol of his status—not even in the dry months of the north-east monsoon. He used it as a walking-stick as he wended his way, with long, measured strides, in the narrow strip of shadow bordering the houses. Saoud ibn Hassan, the moneylender.

He had his regular rounds. Every day of the week he visited forty or fifty addresses in a particular district, and every visit brought him a few cents or stivers, sometimes even a guilder or two. By the time he got back at the end of the day to the dark, fetid hovel which was his home, the only furniture in which was a rickety table and chair and a broken-down iron bedstead, he had certainly

covered between ten and fifteen miles on his pilgrimage from kampong to kampong, thrusting his way into the most wretched slums. As soon as he had counted his money and hidden it in a place of safety, he threw himself down on his threadbare mattress, stinking from years of sweat. But before sunrise he got on his feet again, said his prayers, and went out, for yet another round.

He had a notebook crammed from cover to cover with scribbled Arabic characters. This notebook contained the names and addresses of all the people who owed him money, together with the amounts lent to them and the agreed rate of interest. He did not ask much—only five cents a week per guilder. In Europe 260 per cent per annum might perhaps have been stigmatised as extortionate. But in the East they are more broadminded about these matters. Nor does the plain man there think things out so logically. To get a guilder in hand, make a splash with it at the fair, and then pay five cents interest on it a week later, does not appear to be by any means a silly transaction to Sidin, Karto, or Amat at the actual moment of borrowing the money.

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When his clients managed to fulfil their weekly obligation, Saoud set a tick after their names—"Look, you can see for yourself!"; if they didn't happen to have their five cents handy, he simply added the unpaid interest to the principal. Nothing could be easier. Of course, in the latter case the debt increased, and as a result the interest increased too, slowly but surely, and became more difficult to pay off, especially when the month of Ramadan came round, and people felt morally bound to blossom out in a new jacket and sarong; again, everyone liked to buy some fireworks to celebrate the New Year. And so the debt grew—grew and grew, until at last the debtors hardly dared to ask how much it had become. Never mind . . . better not think about it at all any more. Why should one, anyway? Hadji Saoud didn't swindle you; everything was safely entered in his little book, wasn't it, in the inscrutable letters of the Koran itself, compelling respect from all right-minded people? Propriety alone forbade such an inquiry—it would look as if you distrusted the honourable man!

WHEREVER Saoud ibn Hassan knocked with the handle of his umbrella he was received with mingled fear and veneration. And people thanked him humbly whenever he had shown himself ready to be forbearing with them, and add the interest—which, alas, it was not possible for them to pay this week either—to the principal, for the thousandth time. No wonder he often felt himself to be a genuine protector of the poor, a friend in need! He addressed his clients in loud, self-confident tones, in his nasal Malay with sharp Arabic ch's and sing-song, long-drawn-out terminations. Sometimes, when he had been, once again, particularly helpful, his eye would dwell with favour on a half-grown daughter of the house, and he would say that she might call on him that evening for a present, a sarong or a jacket of batiste, if she liked. And Kromo, Hardjo, Osman dared not refuse, although they had seen the satyr-like gleam in his eye, and their child go white with fright. They would not have dared refuse him even if he had shown desire for their own young wives. Had not Hadji Saoud got them completely in his power with that sum of money they owed him, grown to simply staggering proportions, and now beyond all possibility of payment?

But there came a time when one luckless little virgin hung herself with the slendang, the long batik shawl, he had given her, in the night following such a visit to Saoud's den. The child had gone out and tied one end of the slendang to the ring which was cemented tight into the wall of the well to carry the bucket. Then she had knotted the other end round her neck and leapt into space. Nobody heard a sound. Early next morning her mother went to wash herself, creeping on tiptoe out of the house in order not to wake her daughter, who, she thought, had fallen asleep at last after crying all night—and she found the girl hanging from the well parapet; her feet, twisted convulsively under her in the death agony, just touched the glimmering surface of the water. The mother gave a scream, which passed over into long, heart-rending wailing and brought the neighbours tumbling out of doors, rubbing the sleep from their eyes. But it was too late for little Salna.

Kromo, her father, seized his kris and went forthwith to Saoud's house, where he found the murderer of his thirteen-year-old child in the act of saying his prayers. This did not prevent him from hurling himself upon him. However, he was quickly overpowered by the Arab, who was much stronger than Kromo, and handed over to the police. While Kromo sat in custody, the neighbours took pity on his wife, now entirely alone, who did nothing but lie weeping hysterically across the corpse of her daughter, accusing herself wildly. Her frantic despair upset the whole village.

WHEN Saoud, still pale with fury, appeared to testify against the madman who had attacked him with a kris in the middle of his morning prayer—thus inviting Allah's eternal damnation—he had more trouble from the police than he had expected. They refused to believe him when he swore by the Koran that the girl had come to him of her own free will, and had offered herself to him for the price agreed on in advance with her parents—a new slendang. In the opinion of the Eurasian inspector who interrogated him, there was some sort of dirty business behind his story, of which the child must have become the victim.

Later, the same inspector went to glean information in the village in which the tragedy had taken place. Since he knew the native

population and the language of the country, he managed to get the people to talk. The women, in particular, still full of indignation, and deeply moved after the hours they had spent trying to console the distracted mother, could no longer restrain their tongues, and told the policeman of earlier cases in which Saoud had taken advantage of money being due to him and had requisitioned a young girl for his bed. The inspector asked for names, and wanted to know more about the debts as well. Which of them was in the Arab's toils? How much did they owe him? And how much interest did they pay? You there, Umar, how much do you owe him? Three guilders. And you pay fifteen cents interest a week, and you don't consider it too much? Just try to remember how often you've put down your fifteen cents. Perhaps a hundred times, you think? If that's so, you've paid him back fifteen guilders—five times the amount he lent you! It took Umar's breath away. He had never looked at it in that light before. Allah, what a swindler!

And now the other men began to count and reckon, and asked themselves, with a sigh, what they had been thinking of to let Saoud take them in like that. Really, they were only stupid, humble people—there was no other word for it!

Yes, their womenfolk thought so too, standing round, sorrowfully listening. Men always knew everything so much better, and would never listen to good advice when it came from a woman. But now you could see . . .

'Don't pay him another cent,' said the inspector, to the deep satisfaction of the women. 'The next time he comes for his interest, just tell him from me that the police would like to see his IOU's first.'

'Yes, yes, tuan 'spector, sure—that's what we'll do!' the men promised, made bold by the consciousness of having the law on their side.

Of course, Saoud denied everything. It was all nothing but gossip and personal spite, he said. True, some people owed him money, but he had not demanded an unreasonable amount of interest, especially if it was borne in mind that in many cases he never saw his capital again, because his debtors found it easier to do a moonlight flit than stay and pay him. How often had he not had to tear up an IOU as worthless! He could quite easily have proved all this in black and white, if some godforsaken rascal had not seized

the opportunity this morning, when he, Saoud, had been away handing his assailant over to justice, to rob him of his brief-case, with all his papers in it. If the police could only recover that case, full of valuable, irreplaceable claims and notes of transactions, nobody would be more delighted than Saoud!

The inspector looked at the resentful moneylender and pictured to himself for a moment the state of distraction the man would have been in if his bag really had been stolen from him. Without a doubt, he had hidden his compromising records in a safe place—search of his house would yield nothing. And it would not be long before Saoud ibn Hassan, that devout son of the Prophet, recovered his old stranglehold on the gullible people of the country, who always needed money for some little pleasure or other, and found it too great an effort to calculate how much interest was demanded.

AND now the villagers looked forward in excitement to the day on which Saoud was accustomed to collect his weekly interest. They could have sworn that this time he would not dare to show his face. Not here, where the spirit of his pathetic little victim still lingered. But look—there he was! He carried his right arm, with which he had warded off Kromo's attack, in a sling; he had changed his umbrella to his left hand. But he trod the dusty road as firmly, with as much self-assurance as ever. Would he escape from the whole dreadful affair with only a scar to show for it? Was that justice?

As usual, he went first of all to the house of Umar, who was already beginning to count out ten cents, from pure embarrassment and confusion, when Tidjem, his wife, came hurrying in, followed closely by the two neighbours who had warned her. Morally supported by the other women, she burst out: 'You ought to be downright ashamed of yourself—and you a Hadji, too! A man who's been to the holy city of Mecca! First you drive poor little Salna into her grave and break the hearts of her parents, and then you come here to take the last money we have! You don't pay him a cent, Umar, do you hear? Remember what the inspector said to you!' She uttered these last words with some emphasis, looking straight at Saoud. 'The inspector said that, before we pay anything whatever, he wants to see the paper we

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

signed, in case there's something wrong with it.'

The Arab let her have her say, tolerating grimly, and with infinite contempt, the intervention of a *woman* in his affairs. When at last she stopped talking, he said coldly: 'Whether there's anything wrong with the paper or not, it's impossible for me to show it to the inspector, because some scoundrel's stolen the case I kept my papers in. I've got to begin again from the beginning, look!' Hanging his umbrella over his bandaged right arm, and awkwardly fishing in his pocket with his left hand, he fetched out a new notebook, clean and unthumbed as yet. 'I'm writing it all down in this again, as far as I can remember—but I can't *prove* anything, and so of course I can't force you to pay me, either.'

A murmur of surprise rose from the bystanders. They gaped with sheeplike curiosity at the little book, of which even the first page, opened before their eyes by Saoud, was still blank.

He went on, already regaining his old ascendancy over them. 'So you see, I'm taking interest only from those who'll pay me entirely of their own free will, and I hope they'll help me by saying themselves how much they still owe me. For my part, I'll make it easy for you. If anyone wants to cheat or rob me, this is his chance, because I shall take everyone at his word. Let's begin with you, Umar. How much have you still to pay?'

Umar had to think it over. 'I can't remember,' he said at last, prudently.

'How much did you borrow originally—do you still remember that?'

'Yes—one guilder.'

'One guilder.' Saoud made a note of it, as well as he could with his bandaged right hand. 'And how often haven't you been able to pay the interest, do you think?'

Umar shrugged his shoulders. 'I can't remember—but there were a hell of a lot of times when I *did* pay, I still remember *that*!'

'I didn't say anything about that, did I? All I'm trying to do now is work out the amount your debt has grown to by the addition of unpaid interest. What did you think it was yourself? Two and a half guilders? Three?'

Umar looked hesitantly at his wife, who butted in immediately: 'No, it wasn't as much as that.'

'Two guilders, perhaps,' Umar thought.

To his utter stupefaction, Saoud good-humouredly accepted it. 'Right then, two guilders. I thought myself it was more like three guilders, but you'll know best, I'm sure. So from now on you just pay me ten cents a week—unless, of course, you'd sooner go to the police.' The last words were heavy with an unspoken threat. The villagers all understood it perfectly. If Umar went to the police now, instead of paying that wretched ten cents a week, Saoud would never give him a helping hand again when he was hard up. And in that case it would be no use his going to any other moneylenders, either; Saoud would make sure they put him on their black-list. So great was Saoud's power!

Umar saw this very clearly himself. Telling Tidjem that, being a woman, she knew nothing about such matters, and so had better keep her mouth shut, he counted ten cents into the big, sinewy hand which the Arab held out to him like a cup, and thanked him into the bargain. Afterwards, he tried to explain to his silly wife how he had swindled Saoud; it had really been three guilders he owed, not two, as she was perfectly well aware. He had managed to cheat the crafty Arab out of a whole guilder!

All the men paid, to the accompaniment of protests from their wives, lying to the best of their ability as far as the size of their debt was concerned. That fellow Saoud believed everything you told him! Perhaps he really wasn't such a bad sort after all.

THE question which occupied the kampong now was whether Saoud would have the courage to enter the hut in which Salna's parents had lived—and what he would say when he found it empty.

Kromo had soon been released by the police, in order to bury his daughter, and he and his wife had left the kampong the following day. It was the well which had driven them away. How could they possibly have brought themselves to draw water from it after their child had sprung from its edge into the depths, strangling herself with her new shawl? So the wretched pair had moved, away from the accursed well, vaguely mentioning that they hoped to find accommodation somewhere with relations.

But as yet Saoud knew nothing about all this. By now he had almost finished his usual

round. Kromo was the only one of his clients whom he had not yet visited.

What would he do? With an appearance of indifference, the men and women of the kampong observed him. He seemed to ponder for a minute or so, cast a glance about him. Then he gripped more tightly the handle of his big, faded umbrella and made for Kromo's hut.

When no response came to his knocking, he pushed the door open and went inside. He found no one there, and the only piece of furniture he could descry in the gloom was a native couch. Perhaps the very one on which the little girl had slept, whose unfortunate end had given him so much trouble and caused him so much loss. He stumbled round the room, finding on the way a broken pot and other things which Kromo and his wife had evidently not considered worth taking with them. Gone without saying a word, he thought, and without paying him even the rent they owed him over the past week—for the hut was his property.

In other circumstances Saoud would have let loose a flood of furious blasphemy, spiced with pithy Arabic curses. But this time he decided to bear his loss with resignation, in his heart really relieved at being able to put into the house new tenants who would not be able to throw the death of their child in his teeth every week, in rancorous silence. After all, he had not lost much. He was just about to go out again, when he caught sight of a piece of crumpled cloth lying on the abandoned bed. He picked it up, in order to see whether it was still worth anything. A slendang.

And now he recognised the batik pattern on it. It was the present he had given the little one that evening. The parents had evidently preferred to leave the thing behind, since it was fraught with painful memories for them. But Saoud was not so fastidious in the matter of a useful article of clothing, which had never yet been worn and only needed to be washed and ironed to be as good as new again. Coolly, feeling proud of his rational attitude to these things, he folded the slendang up and put it in his pocket. Then he strode calmly out to face the worthy villagers. It was not without a certain sneaking, subdued exultation that they had seen him enter the empty house, after imagining they had pulled the wool over his eyes with all their lies about their outstanding

debts. 'Just you wait—I'll have the lot of you before I've done!' thought Saoud.

'Of course, you don't know where they've gone?' he sarcastically asked the first man he saw. And when the fellow failed to answer, Saoud looked round among the people gaping at him from a distance. 'I don't suppose anyone can tell me? Naturally, they forgot to leave their address behind when they went away?'

'Perhaps they didn't know where they were going themselves,' one of the women suggested sadly.

For this supposition, Saoud had only a scornful laugh. 'Let's leave it at that, then. And now you can see for yourselves where my money's gone again! Kindly remember this the next time you think of complaining to the inspector that I charge too much interest.' And off he went, calling on his way on the kampong chief—who was also in his clutches—to report that Kromo had absconded, and in consequence his house was to let to any interested party who cared to apply for it.

BUT nobody came to apply for the house. If necessary, people might well have ventured to move into it again, but the well attached to it scared them away. Kromo's home stood deserted in the middle of the village—a dead spot, shunned even by the children, who otherwise looked upon every empty compound as their natural playground, from which no one could chase them away.

Week after week, whenever Saoud came to collect his interest, he had to hear that no new tenant had yet been found. 'What is the meaning of it?' he asked the village chief, in rising anger.

'It's because of the well,' the chief answered truthfully.

Saoud lost his temper and stamped. 'Because of the well? What's wrong with the well? Nobody's ever complained about it before. Doesn't it give water, then?'

'Oh yes—it gives water all right—but they say it's haunted, after what happened there . . .', said the village chief hesitantly. His voice expressed good-natured tolerance for the superstition of simple people, but at the same time he betrayed, by a timid glance round him, that he was not altogether free from such superstition himself.

'What! It's *haunted*, is it? Who's re-

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sponsible for spreading that tale? And what do they say, exactly?"

"I don't know—I've hardly bothered to listen—but it appears that every Thursday night—the night the girl committed suicide, you'll remember—an old woman, Neq Mundi, hears deep sighs coming from the direction of the well, and then a smothered scream, as if somebody's meeting a violent death. After that, it suddenly goes quiet, she says; but then, everywhere round about, from close at hand to far into the distance, the dogs begin to bark . . ."

Saoud swore loudly. "What damned nonsense!"

"Yes, I'm sure it's nonsense," the chief agreed at once. "Neq Mundi's getting soft in the head in her old age, anyway."

"Everyone knows she's not all there—and yet they believe her!"

The chief made a deprecatory gesture. "They're only stupid people, Hadji. They think that Neq Mundi, just because she *has* become a little odd, may be able to hear voices which don't reach ordinary people like ourselves."

"Have you heard the dogs barking?"

"Oh, the dogs often bark—there's nothing unusual about that," said the chief, evasively. "One of them starts—without your being able to say why—and then they all take it up, one after the other, as far as you can hear."

"By now, Saoud had had quite enough. 'I count on you to put a stop to the gossip of that old wife—it's doing me no good.' He tried to think of something to add by way of a threat, but could not hit on anything off-hand. Not that it was necessary, anyway.

The chief readily promised his co-operation. "Certainly, I'll see what I can do. I'll go and have a word with my people."

Of course, he did nothing of the kind. In the first place, what good would it have done? However great the confidence his villagers had in him, they did not credit him with any higher authority regarding the Unseen. Of that, an old woman whose senses were half-befogged knew more than he did, they said. But besides, why should he do anything to oblige the moneylender? Like the rest of the village, he felt a secret satisfaction over Kromo's successful revenge for the death of little Saina—a revenge against which the Arab, so powerful in other things, was powerless, however much he chafed and raged. Not having been born in this country, Saoud

underestimated the strength of the Unseen. He thought he could face it and break it, obstinately relying on plain common-sense. He would soon realise his mistake . . .

OTHERS now began to hear those strange deep sighs, the sad moaning from the direction of the well, the scream which chilled them to the marrow of their bones—and then the barking of the dogs, one after another, receding into the distance. Many people lay awake at nights, waiting for those terrifying sounds, which boded little good for anyone in the village.

One or two timid souls chose to depart while there was still time—and, of course, they, too, forgot in their haste to pay Saoud what they owed him. Nor, as far as most of the defaulters were concerned, could anyone tell him where they had gone to.

There was a striking number of cases of illness in the kampong, people thought—entirely forgetting that fever always accompanied the turn of the season and the wet monsoon. A child died of blood-poisoning—the result of unhygienic treatment of a wound which had begun as a harmless scratch—and the blame for it was put on Saoud, or at any rate on the powers of darkness he had unleashed. It was all due to the well, said Neq Mundi, gazing into space, her eyes glowing with madness. The spirit in the well demanded victims, more victims, now that its greed had been aroused by the offering of Saina. Still greater disasters would befall the kampong—still greater disasters—greater disasters . . .

AND shortly after that the inexplicable rain of stones began. No one knew where they came from, those stones, but they could be heard whistling through the night air and falling with a thud on the roofs of plaited palm-leaves. And the strange thing about it was that it was just the houses belonging to Saoud—he owned about half-a-dozen in the kampong—which suffered most from the plague. The occupants held out against it for a while, making up to a certain extent for their disturbed slumbers by sleeping during the daytime, and summoning their courage for the coming night. All the same, their nerves soon got the better of them. The time came when they dared not pass another

night under the accursed roof, and they went.

Saoud's face was grey and tense with fury. Even though the looks, full of hatred and abhorrence, with which he had lately been received in the neighbourhood had left him cold, the same could not be said of the material loss he was now suffering. Nobody else wanted to live in the 'haunted houses' which had been so hurriedly vacated. Throughout the whole time he had spent in Java, the Arab had not really experienced a reverse; this was his first serious setback.

It was not his custom to invite the police to meddle in his affairs, but this time he saw no alternative. And so he went and lodged a complaint about the rascallions who threw stones about at night and drove his tenants away. The police, not greatly impressed by his passionate plea, gave him to understand that it was impossible for them to guard his houses for him night after night; that, in cases like this, the people throwing the stones—if there were any—were never caught, anyway; and that the stone-throwing, even if it did stop for a time, was in the habit of beginning again at the very moment the watching policeman had left the scene. Such goona-goona incidents were not uncommon, and perhaps, after all, the best way of dealing with them was to ignore them; then the trouble would often die out of itself. If this really was a case of revenge, as Saoud thought, he might be able to end the tiresome manifestations by putting his hand in his pocket and giving a feast in the village. The sacrifice of one or two goats sometimes worked wonders against ghosts and evil spirits.

Blood money. Never! Saoud would not consider such a solution for a minute. If the police didn't want to look after his property, he would do it himself.

SAOUD was no coward, nor was he superstitious, like the inhabitants of this half-heathen land. That evening he set forth, armed only with his umbrella, and spent the night in one of the haunted houses. He sat on the steps of the front veranda, between the bamboo columns, under the roof of palm-leaves, and watched and listened. As he had expected, nothing happened. He heard no sighing, no scream, no dogs barking. Nor was there a hail of stones. But next morning he heard that other empty houses *had* had their share of the nightly nuisance. Fear

was still written on the faces of the people who told him—he could see they were not lying. Right, then—to-night he would keep watch in one of those other houses.

Once again, he saw and heard nothing. Once again, the stones fell elsewhere. Next day, panic-stricken villagers informed him that the house in which he had watched the first time had been bombarded worse than ever before. He vented a torrent of terrible Koran curses on the spirits who thus made game of him; on the police, who left him so casually to his fate; on the silly creature who, by hanging herself in a fit of hysteria, had set this devilish business going.

Up till now something—he did not rightly know what—had kept him from choosing Kromo's deserted hut for his nocturnal vigil. But now he decided to put aside all foolish qualms and look for the 'spirits' where he had the best chance of finding and unmasking them. By a fortunate chance, it so happened that Thursday had come round again—the fatal night! And so, that evening, he betook himself—watched discreetly by the awed kampong dwellers—to the little bamboo house in which Saina's pathetic corpse had lain for burial.

Was he aware of the overwrought state he was in, after two nights spent on the watch? Being as strong as a bull, it did not occur to him that even he could reach the end of his physical resources—through lack of sleep, but still more through impotent rage, through a futile struggle against invisible enemies.

While he sat on Saina's bed, with the umbrella laid across his knees to act as a bludgeon if necessary, he sometimes forgot entirely for minutes at a time where he was, and why he had taken up his post there. His thoughts wandered far away—to the Hadhramaut, where he still had a family, a wife and child, for whom he worked and scraped. He would sometimes sit like that in his own stuffy little room for close on an hour, before going to sleep, musing and silently calculating... I've got to earn so much more, and then I'll take the boat home, a wealthy man, able to live in style in Aden...

In his imagination, he saw his daughter—a thirteen-year-old virgin, just as Saina had been. It was more than eight years since he had seen her last. She was old enough to have worn the veil for a long time now. He pictured to himself her tall, maidenly figure, with her eyes glowing darkly above the veil,

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in the shadow of her headdress. With a start he awoke from his dream, straining his bloodshot eyes to see through the darkness. Perhaps it was owing to his extreme weariness that he felt, for the first time, an intangible, unknown danger hovering about him.

WHAT was that? Only a gecko, hoarsely clearing its throat behind there in the kitchen, before it uttered its cry, repeated four or five times: Tokay, tokay, tokay . . . Had the enemy already reduced him to such a state that he jumped at the voice of a lizard?

And then, all at once, above the monotonous chirping of the crickets, he heard, unmistakably, the sharp tap of a pebble flying through the air and striking bamboo. Ping! And another, and another. Ping!—ping!

Saoud rose to his feet, firmly grasping the handle of his umbrella—a tall, warlike figure. At last the open challenge had come. It awoke in him mingled feelings of satisfaction and uncontrollable fury. With a loud crack, a stone hit the roof. It slid rustling down the thatch of dried palm-leaves and bounced on the ground just in front of his feet. He picked it up and pinched it wrathfully between finger and thumb, as if he already had his hands on one of the rascals who were trying to bring about his downfall.

Ping—rrrrt! Saoud listened intently. He fancied for a second that he heard something else, besides falling stones—perhaps a soft footstep in the garden. Suddenly he switched on the big electric-torch he had bought specially for this night's business and flashed its beam probingly between the trees in the compound. The ringed trunks of pawpaw trees stood out in a corpse-like grey, and mysterious shadows glided down over the green fronds of giant banana-leaves as he moved the light. But there was no living creature to be seen. Nor did he hear anything—except a stone, smacking against the back of the hut.

With mighty strides he dashed to the compound behind the house, tearing a path for himself through the undergrowth. Nobody. Standing still, breathing hard, he thought he again heard something in the front compound, and hurried back. He stood and listened once more, controlling his breathing with difficulty. With the back of his hand he brushed the cobwebs from his sweaty fore-

head. Nothing. Not a sound, except for the shrieking of the crickets, who always became more excited as moonrise neared. But yes—he could hear stones plumping down into the back compound again.

A wily plan came into his head. He left the front compound through the narrow bamboo entrance-gate, as if he had given up the search and was beating a retreat. Then he crept round outside, hugging the dark fence that enclosed house and compounds. When he came to the back compound he thrust his hand above the fence and switched the torch on again. But he had to duck in a hurry—a stone whistled past his head, so close that he could almost feel it.

Damnation! Where were they hiding, his tormentors? He refused to believe such stones could come flying from nowhere. They were being thrown by a human hand, and with great force at that. But from where—from where?

The well, he thought suddenly. He had already run past it six or seven times without pausing to think that it would be perfectly possible for someone to hide on the other side of the parapet. Saoud went straight up to it, switching on his light, quite prepared to see a crouching shape spring to its feet and take to flight. But nothing moved near the well, either. Nothing, except those dark, fantastic shadows he created himself with his torch.

Mastering a certain irrational repugnance, he bent down over the well and let the rays of the electric-lamp play into the depths, down the moist, mossy inside, which gleamed poisonously green. The surface of the water, dark as night, reflected the light with a dazzling golden glitter.

Saoud stood there, as though hypnotised. The hoarse, gasping sound of his own breathing echoed back hollowly, eerily, from the deep round hole with its stone walls. Hot as he was from all the running, the sight of the gleaming water made him realise he was thirsty. He put down his umbrella and torch on the edge of the well, threw down the bucket standing on the parapet, and jerked the rattling iron chain to and fro, in order to tilt the bucket and let water flow in.

And then, in the distorted, broken mirror down there, he saw the face of one who had been hanged. From the twisted, contorted features, and lolling, swollen tongue, he could not make out whether it was a man or a woman. The frightful hallucination lasted

THE WELL

for only a second. And as he closed his eyes to shut it out, he felt an unexpected, sharp pain on the back of the head. A feeling of faintness came over him. Had someone risen behind him, a mere wraith, and hit him a hard blow with his own umbrella? Had a big stone come whizzing through the air and struck him on the head? He sagged across the mouth of the well, struggling with all his might to recover his balance.

But the world went black before his eyes. His right hand, groping for support, was still weak from the dagger-wound in his forearm. It slid helplessly over the slippery moss, and

Saoud fell headlong into the depths, where the water cut short his raucous scream of terror.

After the loud splash, and the clanking of the chain he had dragged with him in falling, all became silent—until, somewhere in the neighbourhood, a dog pricked up its ears and began to bark and whimper restlessly. Other dogs took up the signal of disaster, and the dwellers in the kampong, lying awake in their beds, held their breath and listened to the howling, which moved steadily farther and farther away, and only after a long time was lost in the night.

November First Story: *The Glory Trail* by Philip Kentish

Telegraph-Poles

*Hark how the windy highways ring,
When clouds like pennants fly,
With the keen of the robbed and rootless trees
That have turned their backs on the woods
And march away to the sky,
The gaunt and humbled ones
With their haunting song for October.*

*No nestling ever clings, or titmouse swings
On these flayed things,
Rigged for a crow's-nest,
As a pigeon's couching-breast,
And yet,
Borne on the swallow's wing,
They keep a life in the thoughts of birds
And sing
A little golden song
Like buttercups strung on a shimmering string
In Spring.*

*But October's their time when they sing—
Sing—sing—
On a sibilant chord
That is thin and hungry and high,
Marching away and away—
Stark in the blaze of an evening sky,
Ghosts in the head-lamps' glare at night,
Onward into the morning light,
And up and over the hills
To the land where the sun falls bright
On the heart's desires.
Marching away and away—
To the strange, high music of their singing wires.*

EGAN MACKINLAY.

A Stampede

E. G. WELDON

TWO or three loose horses careering wildly about can cause quite a bit of commotion before they are rounded up. Even a single animal, suddenly deprived of the restraining influence of its rider in unaccustomed surroundings, is liable to take fright and constitute a menace both to itself and to anything that happens to get in the way. But when several hundred panic-stricken horses take part in a general stampede, the situation becomes, to say the least of it, alarming, beyond the immediate control of any human power.

Although there have been instances of horses stampeding in terror from a battlefield, as was the case when the half-trained, moor-bred mounts of Monmouth's peasant horse galloped headlong from the field of Sedgemoor, large-scale stampedes of horses, riderless and free to pursue their own mad course to the end, have rarely occurred in this country. The most notable of such stampedes is, perhaps, that which took place a few years after the South African War, when the troop horses of an entire cavalry regiment stampeded during the night, suffering casualties almost comparable with those suffered by the horses of the Light Brigade at Balaclava.

IN the year of this stampede it had been decided to hold the autumn manoeuvres on ambitious and, for that time, novel lines. Even in those days the army authorities were tending to become invasion-minded, and the close co-operation of sea and land forces was visualised as an important factor in future warfare. Briefly, the scheme of operations was as follows: A force of all arms, drawn from the Aldershot Command, was to embark at Southampton and sail round, under naval escort, to the Sussex coast, where a landing would be effected in face of an

opposing force composed of units from the Southern Command. Amongst the troops to be employed in 'the invasion' were two regiments of the 1st Cavalry Brigade, stationed at Aldershot. Both these regiments had orders to march independently to the neighbourhood of Southampton, where they were to remain in camp during the week-end, preparatory to embarking on the Monday.

Besides the strategical and tactical lessons which it was hoped would be learnt from the manoeuvres, certain innovations in equipment were to be tried out, chiefly with a view to lightening the ever-increasing weights carried by soldiers in the ranks, the cavalryman, in particular, having reached the stage of being so decked out with arms and accoutrements as to resemble the White Knight.

Since the weight carried by a troop horse, with its rider in full marching order, was approaching the region of sixteen stones or more, some bright brain at Army Headquarters hit upon an idea for removing at any rate the straw from the camel's back, and at the same time introducing a simpler system of picketing horses, which could be used independently by scouts or small patrols.

Hitherto the method of picketing—which afterwards remained in practice until the end of cavalry as such—had consisted of attaching the horses by their headropes to continuous lines of rope, known as 'built-up ropes,' and shackling each horse to a heel-peg driven into the ground behind. The built-up ropes were formed by joining together and pegging down short lengths of rope, looped at one end and with a wooden tag at the other. One of these rope lengths was carried round its neck by every horse while on the march. Under this old picketing, although an individual horse might free himself from his heel-peg, the built-up rope would withstand anything short of the united efforts of a whole troop. The

A STAMPEDE

new idea was to replace the built-up rope and heel-peg by a single iron-tipped peg, to which a foreleg of each horse would be attached.

THE 8th Hussars, one of the cavalry regiments detailed, duly left the Aldershot cavalry barracks on the first stage of their march to Southampton. Although some doubts had been expressed in the regiment regarding the efficacy of the new method of picketing, nothing untoward occurred while camping on the route, the horses settling down quietly in the lines, and the iron pegs holding reasonably well in what happened to be fairly firm ground. The only apparent danger lay in the likelihood of injuries through kicks, since a vicious or greedy horse had now more liberty to lash out at his neighbours if he thought that they were getting more than their fair share of hay.

The final camping-ground, where the cavalry were to spend two nights, was on Battersley Common, a low-lying area of peat and heather, some five miles from Southampton, and the camp of the 8th Hussars was somewhat apart from the camp of the other cavalry regiment. A straggling hedge, with a wide, open gateway at the upper end, ran parallel to the horse-lines, separating them from a piece of waste land bordering the main Romsey-Southampton road.

That evening the regiment settled down to rest as usual. The night was calm and still, with the first touch of autumn frost in the air. There was no moon. As the hours of darkness wore on, a light ground-mist rose, shrouding the horse-lines, which were on rather a lower level than the men's tents. No sound broke the quiet of the sleeping camp save the voices of the night guards passing the call 'All's well' at intervals, the occasional snort of a horse, or a hammering now and then as a peg which had become loosened in the peaty soil was driven in.

Somewhere about 2 a.m. the Orderly Officer when on his rounds received a report from one of the night guards that a horse in the lines had been badly kicked. A message was sent to the veterinary officer, who, on arrival, found that the animal had a broken leg and would have to be destroyed at once.

The usual course when it becomes necessary to destroy a horse which has been injured on the lines is to move it, if possible, away from the others before shooting it. But in this case

the veterinary officer decided otherwise. Probably he thought that it would be more humane to destroy the horse where it stood, rather than risk moving it over the rough ground in the dark. In any case, the neighbouring horses were drowsing quietly with their heads down, and the slight crack would be unlikely to disturb them more than momentarily.

Unfortunately the veterinary officer had not reckoned on the damp, soggy ground and on the effect it was having on the single pegs. This might not have mattered, however, if it had not been for another factor, entirely unthought of and, in the obscurity of the mist-wreathed night, unseen.

ALMOST instantaneously, before ever the sharp report of the pistol had begun to die away, the injured animal was dead, sinking quietly down on his knees. A ripple ran along the lines as here and there a horse, rendered alert and wakeful by the chill of the night, raised its head to listen. Then, like the sudden bursting of a storm, came another sound that made every horse near begin to plunge and wrench at the shackle holding its foreleg—the sound of scampering hoofs, accompanied by shrill neighs, as a mob of ponies went scuttling out of the lines. The far side of the camp had been full of New Forest ponies which had come in under cover of darkness and had been busily engaged in finishing off the remains of the hay left over by the troop horses.

Before the night guards could take any action, several troop horses had pulled up their pegs and were galloping up and down between the lines. Quickly the infection spread. On every side pegs went flying out of the soft ground, until in a few minutes practically all the horses in the regiment were loose. In a dark, straggling mass they came trotting and cantering round the camp, their loud snorts and the clanking of pegs mingling with frantic shouts of 'Whoa! Whoa!' as officers and men rushed from their tents. For a moment it seemed as though a general stampede might be averted. The leading horses, reassured by the familiar voices, began to slow down and almost stopped. Then some horse behind gave a squeal and broke into a gallop. Those round him followed suit, and in an instant the whole lot were racing at full speed towards the open gateway.

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There was a sentry posted outside the gate. Hearing the sound of approaching hoofs, he ran to the gateway, where he stood with outstretched arms in the attitude of a man ready to stop a loose horse on the barrack square. He may have been a hero, or else he failed to realise what was happening. Certainly he was lucky. The leading horse caught him with its shoulder as it passed, and shot him sideways, head over heels, into the ditch behind the hedge. Here he lay while several hundred horses came crushing and pushing through the gateway.

By the time the strip of waste ground beyond the camp had been crossed a number of casualties had already occurred, occasioned chiefly by horses being jammed in the gateway or by their being brought down through getting entangled in the ropes of their pegs. The main body, however, reached the road, down which it galloped, the clanging of iron pegs and the clattering of hoofs echoing through the night, as though a multitude of mad blacksmiths were hammering on anvils.

As the pace increased, the stream of runaways began to lengthen out and grow thinner, like a Grand National field after the first circuit of the course has been covered. Those which had been lucky enough to free themselves from their pegs and shackles forged ahead; others, either too lame to remain in the race or else hampered by falls in their immediate front, dropped to the rear and gradually split up into detachments, some of which turned away from the main road.

The leaders continued their wild gallop into the streets of Southampton, several going through the town as far as the docks, where they plunged into the sea and were drowned. The remainder of the horses were by this time scattered far and wide over the countryside, either in groups or singly, wherever chance or instinct had happened to take them.

WHEN dawn broke, the horse-lines presented a desolate sight. All that remained of what a few hours before had been a fine regiment of horses, representative of the flower of the British cavalry, were one or two veterans which had not troubled to move from their places in the lines.

All that day the fugitives were being brought into camp. Few had escaped entirely unscathed. Some were so badly injured that they had to be destroyed. Others never came

back at all. Amongst the latter was an old warrior who, possibly recalling memories of days in the hunting-field before he became an army remount, must have taken a line of his own straight across country. He was found lying with a broken neck on the landing side of a fence many fields away. How he had managed to get so far, encumbered as he was with peg and shackle, Heaven knows.

By nightfall there remained a number of horses still unaccounted for, and it was not until the following day that reports of their whereabouts began to come in. After the first frantic impetus of the gallop had subsided the majority of these had turned towards home, which to them meant not the temporary camp on the chill, damp common, but the distant cavalry barracks with its familiar square and rows of brick-built stables. Some had travelled half the journey back to Aldershot; others, more leisurely, had wandered into fields on the route. The strangest case was that of a horse which was eventually discovered working on a farm twenty miles distant from the camp. The farmer, finding a stray animal grazing in one of his fields, and being in need of extra help for getting in the harvest, had impressed the newcomer into his service. He was quite indignant at having to part with his useful acquisition.

Meanwhile the third regiment of the 1st Cavalry Brigade had been sent for, and was on its way to Southampton, arriving just in time to take part in the manoeuvres. All that the 8th Hussars could muster was one composite squadron. The remainder of the regiment returned, some days later, by train to Aldershot, where the sick-lines were full for some time to come.

TO whom could the blame be attached?

The 8th Hussars had only been obeying orders when using the single pegs and shackles, and the site for the camp was none of their choosing. Those who had instituted the new method of picketing were not responsible for the vagaries of a mob of New Forest ponies. The same applied to the veterinary officer, although he may have committed an error in shooting the injured horse on the lines. The ponies, in their turn, could not be held liable for the behaviour of cavalry horses that were occupying land over which they themselves were accustomed to roam and that had accepted their presence in the lines.

A HOME FROM HOME

And what of the troop horses themselves? Surely these hard-working, honest servants of the Crown, destined to lead a communal life from the time they joined the army as remounts until old age or infirmity caused them to be cast and thrown back into the outside

world, could not be entirely blamed for succumbing to a sudden fit of mass hysteria, when human crowds have been known to do so under less provocation than that which confronted the stampedes of Battersley Common?

A Home from Home

Car Amenities in the U.S.A.

ANGELA FINLAYSON

PERHAPS it is natural that descendants of covered-wagon pioneers should treat their cars as homes from home, but European visitors are invariably startled by the extent to which American civilisation is geared to the needs of people on wheels. With car ownership mounting fast—from just over half of all families in the U.S.A. in 1940 to two-thirds in 1953—Americans spend more and more of their time in cars. There they can consume hot meals and iced drinks while watching movies or TV or, alternatively, settle down to work, equipped with typewriter, dictaphone, and telephone.

To appreciate this phenomenon, it should be remembered that, outside the big cities, public transport facilities are much less adequate than in Britain, while distances to shops and schools, as well as to places of work, are as a general rule greater. In a recent analysis made for the Defence Transport Administration, 95 per cent of the cars in use in America were considered to perform, some time during the day, tasks which were rated as necessary.

The social effects of the automobile habit are far-reaching. It has, for instance, made possible the present rush to live in the suburbs. In the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut metropolitan area, which has seen a population increase of 1,500,000 over the last ten

years, two-thirds of this increase has occurred in the suburbs. At the same time, car-owning has greatly widened the American's vacation and week-end horizons. Fifty years ago, he travelled scarcely more than 200 miles a year from his home; to-day, the yearly average of the family car is more than 10,000 miles.

European immigrants, who have hardly thought of such a thing previously, discover that they need to acquire a car before they buy a house. Fortunately, since the wealthier members of the community trade-in their old cars for new ones every year or so, the second-hand market is prodigiously large. Partly because of this, one-third of all cars are owned by families with incomes under \$3500 a year (£1170 at the current exchange-rate, but nearer £700 in terms of comparative costs of living). And, since cars are no longer regarded as a luxury, car ownership does not disqualify applicants from social welfare assistance.

TO meet the challenges and opportunities of this civilisation on wheels a phenomenal variety of roadside amenities and automobile gadgets have been evolved. At over 3600 drive-in movies Americans can enjoy films from the comfort of their own cars. The movie-theatre owner often provides bottle-warming facilities for babies—who slumber on

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the back seat, thus solving the baby-sitter problem—and sometimes adds playgrounds, where older children can work off their energies before the programme begins. Other amenities may include beauty-parlours for any housewives who lacked time for a fresh make-up before coming out, and barbecue-pits, where the family can roast steaks over an open charcoal-fire. One drive-in, built over a pond, even advertises that 'you can watch movies and fish at the same time.' It is pointed out that, apart from the privacy and comfort afforded by one's own car, the chances of catching colds and other infections—always a worry to hygiene-conscious Americans—are much reduced.

In some areas religious bodies have been impressed by the drive-in idea and so, on Sunday, the American family may attend a drive-in church, one of which even claims to have overcome summer backslding by permitting worshippers to attend in bathing-suits, provided they remain in their own cars.

Not only are a number of banks prepared to receive deposits from the driver at special roadside windows, but some even permit him to cash a cheque without leaving his car, the tellers employed on this service being known as bank-hops.

Other amenities include mailboxes facing on to the road; wayside picnic-tables; and 'motels,' where the traveller can pull up for the night at his individual cabin door, without trekking through hotel lobbies or tipping bellboys; in addition, of course, to the enormous variety of food and drink—and other important items, such as children's toys and aspirin—which can be acquired without leaving the car at drive-in windows or through the services of car-hops.

SO much for the world outside the car window. Inside, automobile gadgets are likewise multiplying. Radio-sets are so common that it is hard to buy a car without one. TV-sets, although banned in many states, are permitted in others, if out of the driver's vision. Business executives can telephone or telegraph or dictate letters into recording-machines plugged into the car's electrical system. Besides portable bars and drop-tables, there are hot-plates to heat food, and it is even possible to fit prescription windscreens to relieve shortsighted drivers of the necessity of wearing glasses—a development which should discourage car-thieves. A rather less expensive triumph of ingenuity is a small pocket device looking modestly like a lipstick-holder: when pressed against a frozen keyhole—no uncommon occurrence, it might be said, since cars are quite often left out in all weathers—it releases a cartridge which generates sufficient heat to thaw the ice.

Envious Europeans may, however, find a measure of consolation in reflecting on some of the difficulties and dangers which America-on-wheels has not yet solved. Traffic density, noise, and parking problems are a nightmare: in New York, it is frequently quicker to walk, and on at least one Mid-West campus students arrive for their lectures an hour early to find a parking-place. Then, 'teen-age trouble' in the family seems much accentuated by disputes over the children's use of the car. And, finally, although in spite of everything motor accidents in Britain remain alarming in number, we may be thankful that the chances of being killed in one are still only half as great here as on the other side of the Atlantic.

My Trees

*You who the year through have comforted,
Taught me your calm and your stillness,
Now in companioning sunshine
Die in your grace and your sadness.*

*I will say prayers at your parting,
I, who have loved your embracing,
Your solemn and intimate kinship,
Will mourn till the burgeoning April.*

*I, who will spread no new branches,
Will weep till the bright leaves resurgent
Will whisper of birth that is timeless,
Though I have grown one year older.*

*My trees that I love, O eternal,
World without end, green and dateless,
I have but Time ere I wither,
I have no new Spring to follow.*

KENNETH MACGOWAN.



The Hard Man

THOMAS KELLY

PETER McLOONE waddled out of the cubicle, which was his office, behind the counter of his well-filled store, cast a cold eye on the newcomer, and silently asked himself: 'I wonder what's brought herself back?' Aloud, his spurious welcome came in measured tones: 'Oh, it's yourself, Mrs Moran. I hardly recognised you in the black.'

'To be sure, I—I hardly recognise myself, Mr McLoone.'

The faded little woman in widow's weeds rested her shopping-basket apologetically on the wide counter as the shopkeeper went on: 'I'm sorry for your great trouble, ma'am. Very sorry indeed.'

'I know that well, Mr McLoone. Everybody has been terribly kind since my recent sad occasion.'

The leading merchant in Ballydrawley stroked his chin, trying to decide on the line he should adopt: 'Mind you, ma'am, 'twas only a short while back I heard the regretted news of your untimely bereavement.' Silently he said to himself: 'That'll put her in her place.'

'Well, now, isn't that surprising?' Eileen Moran's suggestion of doubt was obvious. 'Sure, the funeral was a week yesterday.'

'As long ago as that?' Mr McLoone's

eyebrows shot up in well-simulated surprise. 'Yet I had to start guessing this morning, when I saw you crossing the street in the mourning.'

'Do you tell me that, now?' The widow's query held plain disbelief.

'So I said to myself: "Dear, dear, has somebody near to Mrs Moran passed away?"'

The woman knew, of course, that McLoone's store was the gossip-centre of the village. Peter must have heard of her husband's death soon after it happened. He was going to be awkward most likely. 'But they told me everybody in Ballydrawley was talking about the death,' she countered in evident wonder.

'Still, I had to ask someone in the queue at that very counter who was Mrs Moran in mourning for. That's a mouthful, ma'am, isn't it?' Under his breath he added: 'That'll larn her to give me the go-by!'

'But 'twas in the newspapers, Mr McLoone.'

'I'm not doubting that, ma'am,' the tubby little man in the grocer's apron asserted, 'I'm not doubting it at all. But maybe *you'd* never realise that a busy man the likes of myself has scanty leisure to peruse down the long columns of all is deceased, day after day.'

The widow made no attempt to conceal her surprise: 'But there was a *special* piece, on

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another page, saying sudden death of a popular resident of Cloonahalligan parish.'

'Oh. Sudden was it?' Mr McLoone believed he managed to put surprise into the query.

'Terribly sudden. Less than two days he was ill.'

Peter McLoone flailed with his fountain pen, narrowly missing a wasp that hovered over a dish bearing the remnants of a cooked ham: 'My, my, that was sudden surely.'

'With never an hour's illness before in all his born days.'

'I will say your Sean always looked a perfect picture of robust health.'

'There was a lot of grand things in the paper about him,' Ellen Moran pursued eagerly. '"A devoted husband, a considerate neighbour, an exemplary father, a staunch comrade, a—"'

'Yes indeed, ma'am,' Peter McLoone interrupted tolerantly, 'and such flattering testimony would never have appeared in print unless richly merited.' He wished some customer would arrive to cut short the interview.

'It's nice of you to say that, Mr McLoone.'

'I say it, ma'am, because—though I didn't chance to read what you quoted—it sounds a richly-deserved tribute to a staunch character. Even here in Ballydrawley we don't lightly forget those who were in the forefront of the struggle to regain our inalienable rights in the not-so-far-distant past. It's not our way to put our appreciation of the old campaigners who bore the heat and the burdens of the day on the long finger—'

The woman outside the counter gaped as she broke in excitedly: 'But, sure, Mr McLoone, them was the very words was in the paper, about the great esteem and regard in which my poor man was held?'

Peter McLoone was not easily daunted. 'So it just shows you, ma'am,' he retorted readily, 'that I am fully aware of the measure of remembrance to which your late husband was so fully entitled.'

THE widow's big hope revived. She might yet be able to placate the autocratic shopkeeper. 'The paper said too,' she hurried on, 'that as the impressive cortege slowly wended its mournful way to the little storied cemetery on the historic hillside every voice was stilled, every head was bowed, in mute token of

respect for the passing of one of the old brigade.'

No other customer had yet arrived. Mr McLoone decided to humour the persistent old woman until she disclosed the reason for her visit. He struck a fresh attitude: 'Now, that was a grand testimonial to poor Sean's memory. Nearly as—as representative as the firing of a volley over the grave.'

Ellen Moran hurried to pursue what she thought was her advantage. 'The paper said 'twas the largest funeral in the barony for many years. And there were at least seven motor-cars out from this very village, Ballydrawley itself.'

'I wouldn't doubt that, ma'am, I wouldn't doubt it at all,' agreed the merchant. 'It was no more than your good man well and richly deserved.'

'Including Mr Boyle, that's a member of the County Council.'

'Oh, *his* presence could have been anticipated, ma'am. Old Boyle has oceans of leisure time on his hands. So I'll tell you something now. I'd have been there myself—busy man though I am—if only I'd heard the sad tidings in time to be amongst those present.'

Ellen Moran nodded eagerly: 'Well now, Mr McLoone, as you've given me the chance, I'll say what I'd be slow to mention otherwise. There was many's the one remarked that it was a great wonder, out and out, that you *weren't* there. Especially with the name you have for being a great warrant to go to funerals.'

'Would you believe that, ma'am?' The shopkeeper was stung, but he put all he knew of irony into the question. 'Isn't some busy-bodies paragons of industry when they're minding other people's business?'

'Twas mostly the neighbours, of course,' the widow nodded. 'But then they all know what great friends poor Sean and yourself were for many's the long year.'

'Neighbours!' snapped Peter McLoone. 'The greatest old scandalisers for poking their noses where they shouldn't that ever plagued a parish! Are there some of that mean class mearing yourself, ma'am?'

'But sure they couldn't help but know of the great regard my poor man had for yourself.' Mrs Moran, now that the awkward stage of her interview had arrived, fidgeted. 'Still, I—I'm not denying that we weren't dealing here in the shop with you lately.'

Peter McLoone's thin lips tightened as his

THE HARD MAN

thoughts ran: 'You were not, indeed! And you don't apologise for nothing—you old hake! Maybe you travelled farther and fared worse.' Aloud, he said generously: 'Oh, don't you worry your head about that, ma'am. I never was one to cringe for custom, apart from having no need to do the likes. It's not my motto to confuse friendship with any business obligations.'

'I know that well, Mr McLoone,' came the hopeful confirmation.

To himself the shopkeeper thought: 'And a quare way you have of showing it, you old hawk! You kept the claws in poor Sean, the big slob, till he stopped buying from me, and changed to Maurtheen Feeley—suggesting that I was charging more than the odds. You didn't know I guessed that, did you?' But when his voice was audible it was oily. 'As I often said to my good lady—Mrs McLoone, you know—keep the customers in the shop, and the friends in the parlour. Watertight compartments, as they say.'

'Yes, indeed, Mr McLoone, and well I know your comfortable parlour. But 'twas more on account of Martin Feeley being at the far end of the town. Our end, as you might say. He was more—more convenient for us, coming in from the country.'

'He was, was he?' Peter McLoone asked himself silently. 'It wasn't the way yourself was itching to give me the cut, when you thought you were independent?' Aloud, he remarked easily: 'Sure, it's obvious that Feeley's is—er—geographically handier for your place. A child could see that. Still, ma'am,' he went on, 'the fact remains that, up to a short while ago, Sean and yourself dealt here for all your needs.' His caller stood silently as the peeved merchant flicked his pen and scattered a cluster of flies that hovered above the butter-dish, then pursued: 'I suppose we're all a trifle touchy in one direction or another, so—as you have broached the subject—I'll admit I had a bit of a shock when you transferred your custom to that old soft-soaper and gombeen-man, Maurtheen Feeley.'

The woman in black drummed her fingers nervously on the counter before admitting: 'Poor Sean often said you were pleasant to deal with.'

'Indeed?' Mr McLoone felt the figurative whip tighten in his hand. 'Indicating that you didn't share that estimate, ma'am?' Before the widow could speak he hurried on: 'Fair enough, fair enough. Still, maybe you'll

understand that it struck me as a little peculiar that I was sidetracked when it came to ordering the funeral fittings and furnishings, and the catering and refreshments for the recent sad occasion?'

'But I can explain that, Mr McLoone,' the widow interposed. 'You see, my brother came and he—'

'Oh, I heard all about that brother of yours,' Peter McLoone cut in pointedly. 'I heard he was out of breath, running with the big order to Maurtheen Feeley, the biggest old—'

'Not a big order, Mr McLoone.'

The merchant sounded magnanimous. 'Oh, I grudge nobody a bit of a splash on such a depressing occasion. Indeed, I was glad to hear you had lashings and leavings for both nights of the big wake. Still, the fact remains that—as my advertisement outside states—undertaking in all its branches is my speciality. In most of my lines Maurtheen is only a newcomer, an interloper as you might say.'

'Isn't that what I want to explain, Mr McLoone,' the woman urged placatingly. 'You see, my brother went to the wrong—'

Peter McLoone's smile was patient but supercilious as he interrupted: 'I hope, ma'am, that I'm broadminded enough to admit misunderstandings will arise, even when there's little excuse. Still, least said is soonest mended.'

PETER McLOONE'S appraising eye was riveted on the bit of crumpled paper his would-be customer was nervously uncreasing. 'H'm—er—is there something you wish to order now, ma'am?'

'Yes, Mr McLoone,' the admission came eagerly as the piece of paper changed hands. 'The—the few items on that little list.'

'Yes, yes, to be sure.' Peter McLoone adjusted his string-tethered spectacles nearer the tip of his bulbous nose, jerked a stub of pencil from behind his right ear, and grunted: 'Ah—er—um—er—h'm . . .' After his scrutiny of the list he lifted his head to announce: 'The charge for this little lot, ma'am, totals three pounds, nineteen shillings, and five pence.' After a pregnant pause he added: 'Er—cash.'

Once again his customer fidgeted. 'If you—er—wouldn't mind, Mr McLoone, marking it down in the book until—until . . .'

To himself the patient man nodded as he

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ruminated: 'So my first guess was right? Maurtheen Feeley has refused you any more credit?' But after a helpful cough he said across the counter: 'Until you take out probate, and administer the estate, ma'am?'

Ellen Moran was a little slow on the uptake. 'Probate?' she repeated, avoiding Mr McLoone's unbelieving eye. Too late she added: 'Oh, yes. Yes, of course—probate.'

'Until the alleged estate is administered,' Peter McLoone remarked guardedly. 'Even if a man leaves only half-an-acre of bog, his estate has to be administered. Great jokers, them lawyers, very jocular.' He tapped the end of his nose with the fountain-pen before asking: 'Did Sean—did he leave you comf—I mean do you inherit a substantial estate, ma'am?'

'Well, as I said, Mr McLoone, my brother took complete charge. He's seeing to everything, including the—the probate. He hasn't much time yet to go into things, so I'm nearly as much in the dark as you are about the extent of the estate.'

'I don't remain long in the dark, ma'am,' the shopkeeper said pointedly.

'But then, of course, you needn't,' commented the simple woman. 'You have the electric-light in Ballydrawley.'

There came a grunt from Peter McLoone: 'I spoke metaphorically, ma'am, or if you prefer it, allegorically. I always like to see daylight before I engage in any transaction. So maybe 'twould save your time, as well as mine, if I explain the difficulty I'm in at this very identical moment?'

'You're in a difficulty, Mr McLoone?'

'With my auditors, ma'am,' the merchant bowed gravely.

'Oh, yes, I heard that name. They surcharge the County Council?'

'They are known to some people, ma'am, as accountants,' interposed Peter McLoone helpfully. 'A Dublin firm that acts for myself, and they're a saucy pack of dictators I may tell you. After my last audit here the head of the firm—not a skibjack of a clerk, mind you, but the great white chief himself—comes down special from the city to see me.'

The significance of the pause was lost on the suppliant. 'That—that was a—a great compliment,' she said blunderingly.

'Wait now, ma'am, wait till you hear what you call the compliment,' the merchant urged meaningly. 'What did the head of the auditors say to me? "Mr McLoone," says he, like

a school inspector sneering at the boy who footed the tail-end of the class, "Mr McLoone," says he, "do you know where you'd be if all the debts at present in your books became bad debts?" "Well, where would I be?" says I back to him, thinking 'twas some kind of a backhand joke he was using. D'you see, ma'am?'

'I do, Mr McLoone,' the confirmation came simply. 'Poor Sean was very fond of a joke in his own way.'

'Some joke! as the man said. "I'll tell you where you'd be," says the big shot from Dublin. "Sunk," says he. "Sunk into the depths of ruination—hook, line, and sinker. Out the door you'd go," says he, "lock, stock, and barrel—a penniless bankrupt. You have debts owing across the length and breadth of two counties. So here's my final warning: Don't give credit, however small, to anybody, however big, without my prior permission given in writing under my own hand." Wasn't that a powerful stiff warning to receive, ma'am? Wouldn't it shake you, as the man said?'

Ellen Moran shook a wistful head: 'Still, I'm sure he'd consent, Mr McLoone, if you said that the credit was for the widow of a personal friend of many years' standing.'

The merchant jerked back his head as if one of the still-persistent wasps had stung him: 'Ah, you foolish woman! Haven't you guessed the answer that'd come back per return of post? Or maybe in the flash of a telegram? "Credit customers and personal pals don't mix." So you may guess how tightly my hands are tied.'

'Still, after the great friendship between yourself and poor Sean—' the widow began pleadingly, as she uncreased the slip of paper which the other had dropped with seeming casualness on the counter.

But Peter McCloone held up a restraining hand which silenced her. 'Don't try and tempt me, ma'am, into being sentimental,' he said urgently. Fixing his beady eyes on a cluster of tin-cans which dangled from the ceiling, he pursued: 'If I marked up even the one half-stone of flour to yourself in the books, what'd happen? The head of my auditing firm'd announce that he was finished with me for good and all. He'd say that he had no time for clients that wouldn't follow his advice, and he with a powerful knowledge of business complications. D'you see, ma'am? Maybe you can guess that it wouldn't be long till the

THE WATER UNDER THE EARTH

word was flashed round the wholesalers that I was *inviting* bankruptcy, that it wasn't safe to supply me unless I paid cash on the nail. Still, it's hardly fair to expect you to know all about the ramifications of wholesale and retail business.'

Out of the corner of one eye, Peter McLoone was aware that the bowed head on the other side of his counter was nodding humbly. But only for a moment did he allow his attention to be distracted, for he had embarked on one of his favourite homilies. No fresh customer had yet appeared, so he levered his eyes upwards again and pursued: 'Still, I mustn't trouble you, ma'am, with ruminations that may be above your understanding. But I will say that I'm doubly, indeed trebly, sorry to discover that Sean has left you so—so impudently provided for. If I may speak personal for a few moments, *I'd* never have undertaken the responsibilities of wedded bliss

if there was a fear that someone depending on me might be left in necessitous circumstances. But when I look round to-day what do I observe? I'll admit that I'm often surprised—I'll go farther and say astounded—to notice that not only are there men willing to plunge recklessly into matrimony without regard to the recriminations of the future, but there are an equal number of your own sex ready to take the plunge with them. I've said it before, and I'm going to say it once more.'

Mr McLoone's lecture came to a sudden stop as the shop-door creaked. He blinked as it dawned on him that he hadn't even an audience of one. Turning to waddle back to his cubicle his thoughts ran: 'Dear, dear, wasn't that cool of her? If some people were as ready to listen to good advice as to ask for credit they mightn't have the need to ask for it. But I suppose there'll always be foolish people in the world.'

The Water Under the Earth

Subterranean Irrigation Canals in the Middle East

G. J. FLEMING

THE meaning of the words 'the water under the earth' in the second commandment puzzled me for a long time. The Middle East gave them meaning. It has been my lot to live and work for upwards of thirty years in the different countries of the Middle East. There daily the words of the parables could be heard and the various scenes in the Bible witnessed, for both were part of the everyday life of the people. The threshing-floor, the vineyard, the fig-tree could be seen exactly as described. But for long any precise meaning for hidden waters eluded me, though it did seem obvious that this must have been a

matter the importance of which was generally known in Biblical times.

For the most part the Biblical lands are arid. Man must by the sweat of his brow force the earth to yield increase, for no easy way is offered of extracting the riches of the earth. Meagre culturable patches, which man timidly wrests from the desert and precariously holds, stretch into the shimmering heat of a fierce land where nature delights in extremes. In one year smiling, by bountiful rains she will give to man crops, the abundance of which satisfies his needs beyond the dreams of avarice of a peasant—or a Pharaoh or a Joseph; in a

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succession of years with little or no rainfall, she will deny him sufficient grain even to sow the ensuing crop. It is indeed the land 'twixt desert and the sown.

To maintain life in those desert fringes, a man is forced to utilise every available source of water. Egypt rose to greatness on her ability to build and maintain irrigation works capable of sustaining great multitudes of peasants, who formed the backbone of her armies. Built on the Tigris and the Euphrates, mighty works made rainless regions fertile, to feed a teeming population that could and did sustain the ambitious territorial conquests on which the greatness and splendour of Nineveh and Babylon were reaped.

But the great empires of Egypt and Mesopotamia were founded on material things and had little room for a spiritual God. Whence the second commandment warns the chosen people not to make for themselves 'any graven image, or any likeness, of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth?' What of 'the water under the earth'? This phrase applies, I feel sure, to the underground water-channels found almost exclusively in Persia. The tapping of such a source of water, bringing fertility, gave rise to an abundant population which had its being firmly rooted in the land.

The greater part of Persia could not boast a heavy rainfall. Her valleys were broad, but fertility was denied them for lack of surface moisture. In volume, the waters of her rivers could not compare with those of the Nile, whose source lay cradled in the vast tropical jungle, while the snows of Ararat and her foothills supplied the waters for the two great Mesopotamian rivers. The mountains of Persia, bleak and barren, brought down rain indeed, but only for the water to dash almost unchecked into the valleys and then to disappear. It was not altogether lost. It was carried underground, slowly seeping forward, confined to some ancient river-bed lying deep in the womb of earth. Surely it is the tapping of these subterranean reservoirs that provides the answer we seek. Man's necessity, calling forth man's ingenuity and skill, resulted in plots of chosen ground yielding up the riches of harvest.

MAN dug an underground canal, called in Persia a 'kanat,' in Syria, Iraq, and Baluchistan a 'karez.' To this day in Persia

there exist hundreds of miles of kanats, some in use, some crumbled into ruin, some of recent construction. Many have functioned without attention for long years. Some run short distances only, while others, such as the kanat near the ancient town of Erbil in Iraq, flow in underground darkness for twenty miles.

I will describe a kanat dug under the simplest and most perfect condition of soil, for the craft of construction has survived down through the centuries. The source of the ancient river-bed having been located at, say, thirty feet underground, a shaft is sunk to prove the amount of water seeping forward in the sand. If the water is sufficient in volume, a line of shafts, between twenty and twenty-five yards apart, is then led from the source of supply to the site chosen by the cultivator for his crop. Armed with a short-handled adze, a man descends the shaft and excavates his way till he reaches his mate, who has been edging towards him inch by inch from the foot of the next shaft. As each advances, he pushes the soil behind him, such spoil being taken to the surface, through the base of the shaft, by buckets of skin slung on a primitive windlass.

Thus is the simplest of kanats made. In practice, of course, such simple types are rarely possible. For example, when a burrow has to run through perhaps a hundred yards or so of sand, the whole of the tunnel has to be pitched with stone. Much work is involved, since the stone, brought to the top of a shaft in baskets on the backs of camels, must be lowered piece after piece by the windlass, before being rolled and pushed laboriously, and then built in. By way of the girdled burrow the water, when it arrives, will safely percolate through the sand and ripple along a stone-lined tunnel.

Sometimes the line of shafts must run over a hillock. Consequently the depth of the shaft must be increased so that the horizontal line of the channel is maintained. Shafts, in primitive ways, have been sunk to the astonishing depth of over four hundred feet to carry water through such an obstacle. Sometimes, too, an outcrop of rock may be met, which may be pierced only after weeks or even months of toil ere the water can flow to irrigate the land beyond.

Yet another modification of the kanat is called for if depressions of the land are encountered. The tunnel in its advance may be brought to the surface and run for some distance as an ordinary channel, disappearing

THE PASSING OF THE SNOTTY

and reappearing according to surface undulations. Just such a type may be seen at the ancient town of Salamiyah in Syria, the most westerly example in my experience of a kanat. It is interesting to record that this town pays tribute to His Highness, the Aga Khan. How peculiar it is that a town, supplied by primitive kanat on the fringe of the Syrian desert, should have as overlord one who traces his origin to the land of Persia, and that the district round Salamiyah should be celebrated for its breed of pedigree horses.

The work of sinking shafts to enable water to be carried underground represents a very great feat of human ingenuity, for no instrument is used to ensure that the channel has been dug to the correct slope, and of human endurance, too, for all is done by manual labour.

At last comes the day when excavations are completed and the water is led into the newly-constructed kanat. On no account must the water fill the channel. Indeed, the flow must be so regulated that the waters never rise to a point above the commencement of the arch. If too much water enters where the arch of the kanat is earthen, the roof may be eroded into

collapse, involving a tedious re-excavation of the damaged stretch. Such adjustment of the head of water involves a skill that in operation seems almost uncanny.

So the waters from hundreds of kanats flow out of the deep earth on to the land and provide work for great numbers of peasants—that source of strength of the ancient Persian empire. The rulers of these ancient times used 'the water under the earth' to rear and sustain vast armies for aggressive war and conquest. And, looking at Persia to-day, who can say just why the fighting qualities of the Persians have declined through the centuries?

LET me finish on a note not without its significance. I saw many wonderful and lovely sights during the last war. In Cyrenaica I saw a hundred acres of almond-trees in flower. I gazed across the Sea of Galilee in the darkening, the setting sun still lingering on the tops of the barren mountains of Gilead. Once, at dawn, I emerged from a small town in Persia and drove for a mile through a field of white flowers of entrancing beauty, flowers nourished by 'the water under the earth.' The white flowers were those of the opium poppy.

The Passing of the Snotty

Captain FRANK H. SHAW

FIFTY per cent of the remaining glamour attached to the Royal Navy goes with the vanishing midshipmen. They were called midshipmen because their station in action was amidships, to carry the quarter-deck orders to the gun-decks and sail-trimmers. Until Captain Marryat rendered them famous through the escapades of Peter Simple and Jack Easy, they were but little known to general fame. But, up to now, these young warrants were as characteristic a feature of

the Senior Service as the White Ensign itself. Incidentally, they were amongst the finest recruiting agents the Navy had. Those white patches and that natty dirk were magnetic in their attraction for the adventurous youth of something like two centuries.

In the Navy of Anson's day these young aspirants were caught very young indeed. There is lots of truth in the story that Mr Midshipman Collingwood, being accosted by the first-lieutenant on his initial boarding of a

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ship-of-war, offered him a piece of his cake! Ten years old he was.

In that far-off period the youngens did not get preliminary considerate training in shore establishments or training-ships; they were pitchforked straight into the noisome gunrooms of seagoing vessels, to sink or swim as best pleased the fates. And from quite early times custom ordained that even an Admiral must doff his hat before entering their quarters.

These quarters were indescribably bad—insanitary, practically lightless, with little fresh air admitted, even in fine weather. True, 18th- and 19th-century youth was not pampered at the best of times; but it has always been a puzzle to me how these tough babies survived, even though I learnt the sea-trade under almost identical conditions. It was a case of kill or cure—the survival of the fittest. The youngsters were, however, granted a sort of officer-status and endowed with minor authority from their earliest years.

From these almost children the great fighting navies were officered. Such men as Clowdisley Shovell, Howe, Jervis, and Nelson went through the mill in the gunrooms of this three-decker and that. But a snotty of the sailing Navy era worked manually as well as mentally. He was expected to be first out at the mizen-topmast yardarm when reefing was ordered. Like Francis Drake's gentlemen adventurers, he was required to hale and draw with the mariners, as well as command a section of a gun-battery when his ship went into action; even to command a boat when a cutting-out expedition was planned. Even so late as the bad old slave-trade days of the middle 19th century he was considered capable of commanding a dhow-hunting cutter down Tajura way. And, throughout naval history, he stood as an emblem of precocious courage and ability, respected, not to say loved, by the hard-case ruffians of the lower-deck.

The first naval V.C. was won by a midshipman. Another won the high honour during the Boxer Rising in China. Captain Bligh of the *Bounty* may have decreed that 'a midshipman is the lowest form of animal life!' but even he had to admit that the young gentlemen had their uses.

Not that all snotties were baby-faced children. During Nelson's era you'd find scores, hundreds, of them, bearded to the eyes, aged, embittered, because they commanded no influence to bring them promotion

or ability to win to the higher ranks. The darling little midshipmite of the fictionists was actually a grown-up, a hefty man of much knowledge and endurance.

THE swift advance of science has changed all that. Maybe the changing scene demands the abolition of the picturesque figure. But I remember that the old *Britannia* days bred a tremendous ability and comradeship, when the desire to be accepted for entry aboard that old wooden-waller was the enthusiastic ambition of most right-thinking boys. A warship of to-day, being a scientific laboratory more than a seagoing vessel, demands other qualities than enthusiasm and the spirit of romance. Junior officers need to know a great deal more than the old 'hand, reef, and steer' curriculum, where common-sense and know-how helped more than intricate theoretical study.

The boisterous gunroom promises to be no more. A recent visit to a giant aircraft-carrier, where twenty snotties were berthed, convinced me, an old stager, of the imminent change. These midshipmen were embryo scientists plus. They might not have known the way to handle a marlinspike, but radar and atomic energy held few secrets from them.

Most other navies have gone through the change long since. The U.S. naval ensign is really a sub-lieutenant, as our younger entry will become under the new regime. The intensive study required to produce the needed expert of to-day is impossible for an unfeudged boy. He simply has not learnt how to learn at the tender age of thirteen and a half. All to the good in view of the future, maybe. Boy-ratings in the Navy of to-morrow are almost academic in the scope and variety of their knowledge. It is only fitting that those set in command over them should have superior wisdom.

Yet, remembering my own stormy youth, I find regret for the passing of an institution with two hundred and fifty years of remarkable history behind it. The young dare-devil toughs who filled the Royal Navy's gunrooms became the fighting captains of two World Wars, and added new and shining laurels to the glory of the Senior Service. And they formed a grand recruiting agency, as fine an advertisement for the sea as has ever been known.



A Housemaster's Case-Book

IV.—Roger McGinnis

EVERETT BARNEs

*And we sought and we found and we
bayed on his track
Once, twice and again!*

Kipling.

LIKE most housemasters in boarding schools I have had my share of runaways. They have usually been simple children, wretchedly homesick, or unhappy for some other reason, who have decamped to their homes and quickly been traced; they have then been brought back, patted on the head, and told not to be so silly again. Generally they have settled down in course of time, and the episode has passed into oblivion. But one flight from my House at Melbury was not so easily forgotten.

I was rung up by the Head just before ten o'clock one night. Some citizen of Melbury had informed him that he had passed a boy in the street in his shirtsleeves and wearing bedroom slippers. He did not know that it was a Melbury boy, but doubtless the Head would like to inquire whether one of his pupils was behaving in so eccentric a manner. The Head was therefore getting all house-

masters to check their Houses in case they should have a boy missing.

It was the time when the older boys were going to bed, just before lights-out, and my House Captain had not yet come in to report all present. I sent for him—he was called Geoffrey Wynter—and told him to go round the dormitories at once. He was back in a few minutes to tell me that a boy named McGinnis appeared to be missing. He had last been seen leaving the bathroom in the dress described by the Melbury citizen.

Roger McGinnis came from Northern Ireland and was a psychopathic case if ever I saw one. He was a smooth boy, glib of speech and with a ready smile, which he obviously considered dazzling. Anyone so transparently insincere could not fail to be sinister; besides which he had a perverse, neurotic temper which made him unpopular with other boys. One had only to be a short time in his company to be aware of a strangely twisted mentality. In my personal dealings with the boy I was always hard put to it not to show how much he repelled me.

The boy usually kept out of trouble, but his form master had recently reported him

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for unsatisfactory work, and trouble was undoubtedly brewing up for him. This circumstance might have provided some sort of motive for his flight—though a very inadequate one; and his underclad condition could have enabled him to get away just before lights-out without causing comment—if he were seen going downstairs he could easily allege he was fetching something from his study. But I strongly suspected that the flight itself, the time chosen, and the dishabille were all prompted by pure exhibitionism.

The original report to the Head had described the boy as walking in a westerly direction, which meant that if he kept on the same course he was heading for open country, with the next village—Priors Worthy—about six miles off. There was no railway-station in that direction before Granstock, some fifteen miles away. I left Michael Risborough, my House Assistant, in charge, got out my car and took Wynter with me in pursuit.

WYNTER was thrilled with the whole idea of a nocturnal chase, though trying to preserve an outward calm. 'The boy must be off his rocker, sir,' he said, 'going off without a coat at this time of night.'

I should have placed no reliance on McGinnis's rocker at any time, but I could not tell Wynter so.

'Where do you think he's making for, sir?'

'I have no theory,' I said, 'but if he keeps to the road it shouldn't take us long to find out.'

McGinnis had perhaps twenty minutes start of us. When we had gone something over a mile, we saw the headlights of a car approaching. 'We'll stop this car, if we can, and make inquiries,' I said.

I got out and flagged the car, which, after making a pretence of running me down, did in fact stop. It contained two men who might have been farmers. I asked the driver whether they had met a boy in shirtsleeves on the road. 'Well,' he said, 'we didn't exactly meet him, but we saw someone like that making off across the down towards Ingoll Farm,' and he pointed behind him to his left. 'We wondered who it might be. My friend here was sure it was a ghost.'

The friend muttered that any road it was something damed queer—and he was not far wrong.

I thanked them, and we drove on. I turned off the road to Ingoll Farm and found the occupant, a man called Merson, whom I knew slightly, just going to bed. No, he had seen nothing of a boy in shirtsleeves. We made a rather cursory examination of his barns and outbuildings without success—a proper search in the dark would have taken hours. Then, much to Wynter's disgust—I decided to give up the quest for that night. The boy might have gone past the farm to some outlying barn or haystack, and there was really no hope of finding him in the dark if he wanted to play hide-and-seek with us. So I returned to Melbury, reported our lack of success to the Head, and notified the police.

NEXT morning by 8 o'clock the police had no news, but Merson, the farmer, rang up to say that the boy had been seen by one of his men going towards Priors Worthy. After a hurried breakfast I took the road again, this time accompanied by Michael Risborough as well as Wynter—a couple of athletic types capable of dealing with any emergency. We got about two miles beyond the place where McGinnis was last reported without seeing any trace of him.

'What about asking at that cottage?' Risborough suggested. There was a solitary cottage, probably occupied by a farm labourer, close to the road a little way ahead. We drew up outside and I got Risborough to make inquiries. A middle-aged woman opened the door and from their manner of conversation I saw there was news. Presently Risborough hurried back to the car. 'He's in there,' he said. 'She's giving him breakfast. Do you want me to go in?'

'No,' I said. 'I'll make the arrest.'

I left Risborough and Wynter by the car. The woman was still standing at the door, looking slightly ill at ease, as though not certain whether harbouring runaway schoolboys might not be a criminal offence. She was a kindly soul, easy money for McGinnis's dazzling smile. 'He looked so starved with cold,' she said, 'I thought I'd better give him something to eat. I hope I didn't do wrong.'

I comforted her. 'It's never wrong to feed the starving. Will you please take me in to where he is?'

She led me into the kitchen at the back of the house. There was a half-finished meal on the table, and the room was empty.

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The woman and I looked at each other. She was now really dismayed—guilty not only of harbouring but of helping to evade capture. 'He was here when I went to the door, sir, truly he was.'

'Where does that lead?' I said, pointing to another door.

'Into the back-garden, sir.'

I went to open it, but found it locked. 'Where's the key?' I asked.

'It ought to be there, sir. He must have taken it and locked the door on the outside.'

I went out through the front-door again and collected Risborough and Wynter. Together we walked round the house and into the back-garden. There was a tool-shed there, a chicken-house, and an earth-closet. We searched every inch of the place, but there was no sign of the fugitive. Outside the garden the ground rose to the skyline a quarter of a mile away without a vestige of cover. It seemed quite impossible that the boy could have risked trying to get over the skyline without being seen. We returned to the car again baffled and mystified.

THERE was now a man with a motor-bicycle by the car. I recognised with an inward groan Mr Harrismith, reporter on the staff of the *Melbury Gazette*, whose passion for publicity about school affairs we did not share. 'Good-morning, Mr Barnes,' he said. 'Sorry to hear you're having this trouble. I suppose you couldn't give me a few particulars?'

'Certainly,' I said. 'These gentlemen and I have come out here bird-watching. We have made some interesting observations. Good-morning.' And we embarked in the car.

Mr Harrismith smiled a sickly smile. He was accustomed to rebuffs in his researches into the seamier side of Melbury school-life and was not easily discouraged.

On second thoughts, it seemed inadvisable to leave Mr Harrismith behind, where he would certainly find out from the lady in the cottage what we had been doing there; and if he did trace McGinnis, goodness knows what sort of a lurid story he would get from him. So I detached Wynter to walk past him as though looking for something, and to whisper in passing: 'Follow us if you want to be on to something good!'

Wynter performed this task with relish and

told us on returning to the car that he had exceeded his instructions by adding: 'May be suicide!' I thought this a little rash, but one must not stifle initiative.

Mr Harrismith was successfully lured from the lady of the cottage and followed us expectantly as we drove on. After a brief discussion in the car about our next step we decided that there was nothing to be done at the moment except report progress to the police. So I turned in a side lane and drove back to Melbury, with Mr Harrismith still in hopeful attendance. I told Wynter on no account to let him question any boys. Then I rang up the police from my house and sent a telegram to the parents.

I HAD only been in school a few minutes of the first period when I was called out to the telephone again. It was the Melbury police. They told me McGinnis was detained at the police station at Granstock. He had been picked up apparently making his way to the railway-station in that town. The boy had evidently secured a lift, having travelled some ten miles in well under an hour.

I got a Monitor to sit in with my form and sent a message to Risborough to do the same. Then together we took the road again. Looking back after a few miles, we found the adhesive Mr Harrismith hot on our trail. 'Mike,' I said, 'Mr Harrismith must be eliminated. Lord knows what McGinnis will be looking like by this time. We just don't want Mr Harrismith present at our reunion. How do we get rid of him?'

'Easy,' said Risborough. 'I'll show you. Take the turn to Slumpton when we get there.'

In a mile or so we turned left off the Granstock road. 'Now step on it,' said Risborough. 'Get a few hundred yards ahead, and we're away.'

The Slumpton road was winding and enclosed by hedges, and Mr Harrismith was generally out of sight. Risborough took me off up a lane on the right and almost at once into the entrance to a farm. Stopping there, we heard Mr Harrismith titupping by. We gave him a few minutes to get clear, then turned back to the Granstock road.

At Granstock Police Station a sergeant took us into the office. 'We've got 'im in a cell, sir. 'E was sleeping just now. A queer case, if you ask me.'

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'Do you know how he got here?' I asked.

'Jumped a lorry when it was stopped at a pull-in. We picked 'im up almost as soon as 'e got off it—there was no mistaking 'im. 'E told us 'ow 'is 'ousemaster 'ated 'im and thrashed 'im every day, and 'e couldn't stand no more.'

'That's me,' I said.

The sergeant was a man of understanding. 'Oh well, sir, you can't believe all 'e says. 'E's not above telling the tale, in my opinion. And I daresay 'e's a bit of an 'andful.'

They fetched the boy from his cell. He was filthily dirty and wore a sack partly filled with hay over his shoulders and sacking round his legs tied on with binder-twine. This gave him a faintly mediaeval appearance, like something left over from a village pageant. It was an awkward meeting, and I could think of no suitable opening, in front of the sergeant and a constable. 'Well, McGinnis,' I said, 'this is a nice performance.' I hoped that my baleful glare would supplement the feebleness of the remark.

'I'm sorry, sir.'

'I hear you told the sergeant I thrashed you every day.'

'Oh no, sir. The sergeant must have misunderstood what I said.' He tried to capture the sergeant with a very washed-out version of the dazzling smile, but failed signally. The sergeant grunted and busied himself with papers, muttering—as far as I could catch his drift—that it wouldn't be a bad idea if I started from now on, anyway.

WE put McGinnis in the back of the car and drove off. He made one feeble attempt at a hysterical scene at the prospect of going back to Melbury, but Risborough shouted him down before he could get properly started. After that, he sobbed laboriously for the rest of the journey. We had the satisfaction of meeting Mr Harrismith still trying to pick up our scent. On recognising the car, he turned and followed us back to Melbury.

I thought I had better hear what the wretched boy had to say before reporting to the Head, so I took him into my study and got Risborough to send another wire to his people. 'Now, McGinnis, perhaps you will explain just what you thought you were doing.'

'I don't know, sir. I can't remember

starting out at all. I just found myself walking down the road away from the school.'

'That sounds very strange. Why didn't you come back at once?'

'I was frightened, sir. I thought I should be punished for being out of the House at night.'

'So you weren't meaning to run away?'

'I've told you, sir, I can't remember anything about it. But I shouldn't have run away on purpose without a coat at this time of year, should I, sir?'

'Assuming that you ran away without knowing you were doing so—which doesn't sound very probable—was there anything on your mind which would make you want to get away from Melbury?'

'Well, sir, Mr Wright'—that was his form master—'has a down on me, as you know.'

This infuriating line is peculiar to the lowest type of schoolboy. I cut him off short. 'I know nothing of the kind. But I do know that your work for him has been most unsatisfactory for some time.'

The boy assumed an expression indicating that only extraordinary fortitude prevented him from bursting into tears at the malignity and lack of understanding shown by all the powers of Melbury, and myself in particular. I had had as much of this interview as I could stand, so I brought it to an end. 'I am now going to the Head to report your return and discuss what should be done with you. Will you promise not to run away again before I come back and send for you?'

'It's not fair, sir,' said McGinnis.

'What's not fair?'

'To make me promise, when I might run away again without knowing I was doing it.'

'Right,' I said. 'Come with me.'

I took him up to the bathroom and gave him five minutes to wash and change his clothes. Then I put him in his dormitory, which was on the second floor, locked the door, and took the key away.

The Head and I decided that the boy should be 'gated' for the rest of the term—that is, he was not allowed outside the House precincts without leave, except to go to work and Chapel and to play games. He and his parents should be told that if he ran away again he would not be allowed back.

I RETURNED to the House, intending to impart this sentence to McGinnis and

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then put him back into circulation in time for the next school period, when I could also resume my own disrupted teaching. I unlocked the dormitory and found it empty.

I searched under the beds and in any other place where the boy could possibly be lurking. I looked out of the windows, which were twenty feet up, half-expecting to see a mangled form stretched on the gravel below. But there was no sign of the boy anywhere; he had just vanished. I could think of no explanation but that he had picked the lock of the door.

Furious and mystified, I found Wynter, who was fortunately having a study period, and got him to help me search the House. We could find no trace of the miserable boy. So I sent Wynter out to question any likely people in the street who might have seen him pass, while I rang up the Head and the police to say that McGinnis had presumably absconded again. In default of any clue as to the direction he might have taken, there was nothing more to be done. It seemed that I might as well give up my detective operations for the moment and go into form again.

At the end of the period Wynter was waiting outside, all excitement, to tell me that someone answering to the description of McGinnis had been seen to get into a two-seater car and drive off through the town. I rang up the police to inform them of this, and they told me that a boy who was evidently McGinnis had been seen at the station and had taken a ticket to London.

Immediately afterwards, Mr Harrismith called and was let in, much to my annoyance, before I could prevent it. He had heard in some extraordinary way of the second flight and came this time not to ask for a story, but to give me one. The ubiquitous boy had been seen walking in the same direction as on the previous night. Could he be of any help?

No, I said ungratefully, he could not. Mr Harrismith left, and I saw him take the road away from the town on his motor-bike.

Rather bewildered by the number of directions which our friend now seemed to be taking simultaneously, I spoke to the Head on the telephone and with his approval sent another telegram to the parents: REGRET INFORM YOU ROGER DISAPPEARED AGAIN DIRECTION UNCERTAIN POLICE INFORMED BARNES

On returning to my study, I found Michael Risborough there. 'Well,' he said, 'what did McGinnis say?'

'A lot of poppycock. He ran away without knowing he was doing so. He can't say that this time.'

'This time?'

'Picking locks is not done by the subconscious.'

'Picking locks?'

'Oh, don't keep on echoing my words, please.' By now I was feeling more than a little tetchy. 'Try and say something to the point, Mike.'

'I'm sorry, but I don't know what you're talking about.'

'Haven't you heard that the plaguey boy has decamped again? If you haven't, you're the last person in Melbury to hear.'

'Do you mean a few minutes ago—since the last period?'

'No, just before the last period.'

'But I've just been talking to Whitstall, who was taking him in maths during the last period. I particularly asked about the boy, and he told me he seemed no more unattractive than usual.'

I must have looked somewhat dazed. I explained to Risborough how McGinnis, locked in his dormitory, had performed a vanishing act and was now again being hunted by the police of several counties; while his frantic parents were doubtless *en route* for Melbury.

'A repeat performance,' said Risborough, 'as in the labourer's cottage this morning.' Was it only that morning? It seemed like a week ago! 'He *must* have been hiding somewhere in the dormitory when you went in. I'm going to look.'

WE went up to the dormitory together. Risborough had to admit that there was no hiding-place except under the beds, where I had looked. Then we both noticed a trap-door in the ceiling. 'Where does that go?' he asked.

'Under the rafters, I suppose. I've never been up.'

The trap-door was close to the wall of the room and there was a chest-of-drawers under it. 'With a chair on that, one might just manage it,' Risborough said.

'But there was certainly no chair on it when I came in.'

Risborough's eyes lingered on the trap-

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door as though he were reluctant to abandon the only theory which stood between us and the supernatural.

Then we came down, and I sent for McGinnis. Almost to my surprise, he duly appeared. 'Why did you leave the dormitory when I had told you to stay there?' I asked.

'The next period was just starting, and I thought you would like me to go into form, sir.'

'How did you get out?'

McGinnis seemed surprised at the question. 'I just walked out,' he said.

'But the door was locked.'

'Oh no, sir. It opened in the ordinary way.'

There was no doubt whatever that the door of the dormitory was still locked when I returned to it. Baffled, I tried to get some light on the other vanishing trick. 'You were having breakfast at a cottage when we arrived there this morning,' I said.

'Yes, sir, a woman gave me breakfast.'

'How did you leave the cottage?'

'I went out by the back-door, sir. Then I walked round to the front and down the road.'

'If you had done that you would have been seen by Mr Risborough and Wynter.'

'No, sir. There was your car on the road, sir, but no one with it.'

I gave up. It is humiliating to be made a fool of by one's pupil, but for the moment he had me beat. I told him to consider himself 'gated' and spent the remainder of the break telephoning to the Head and the police and sending another telegram to the McGinnis parents—the fourth that morning. It was painfully clear that my sanity must now be suspect in certain quarters. I also suggested to the *Melbury Gazette* that they should endeavour to call in their bloodhound.

THAT evening Michael Risborough came in again. 'I didn't like to think that a boy like McGinnis possessed magical powers,' he said, 'so I've been doing a little research. A cursory glance through that trap-door showed that someone had been up there recently, leaving marks in the dust. As to getting up there, he only had to tie something on to the chair he got up by—a dressing-gown cord, for example—and then pull the chair up after him.'

'Elementary, my dear Mike. Hadn't I explained that before? And the escape from the cottage?'

'Equally obvious. You remember there was a stone wall on the other side of the road?' he said.

'I believe there was, now you mention it,' I answered.

'Our Mr McGinnis went out through the back-door and locked it. Then he would have heard us coming round the side of the cottage to search the garden. He only had to slip round the other side of the house, cross the road, and lie up behind the wall till we went away.'

'I see. Evidently your mind and McGinnis's work in much the same way. I trust you will both use your remarkable powers with restraint in the future.'

Mike Risborough smiled amiably. 'He's twelve years ahead of me,' he said. 'I'm not really in his class.'

We agreed that the less of McGinnis's future spent at Melbury, the better for Melbury.

And when we saw the *Melbury Gazette* headlines and what Mr Harrismith had made of his scanty information, we wished we had told him the comparatively humdrum truth.

Mist

*The moorland mist has drifted down the hill
And shrouded all the wood in secrecy.
The once-familiar trees are strangers now,
And stand like ghosts upon an unlit stage.
No song of birds disturbs the silence here.
There is no sound beyond the drip of leaves
In solemn sequence on a sodden ground;
As if the pendulum of some old clock
Recorded time, in dim obscurity.*

VIVIAN HENDERSON.

Strong Man in a Wheelchair

A Forgotten Side of Fielding (1707-54)

EGON LARSEN

ONE day in January 1749 a well-organised gang of criminals broke into London's Gatehouse prison, freed one of their mates, and left the warden mortally wounded. On the same day the novelist Henry Fielding took the sacrament at St Paul's Church, Covent Garden, and abjured King James II and all his descendants—two essential ceremonies for a newly-appointed Justice of the Peace. Then he betook himself to the courtroom on the other side of the Covent Garden Market, in Bow Street. It is still London's principal police-court, and it was Henry Fielding who made it the headquarters of a relentless struggle against the lawbreakers of the metropolis.

It seemed a hopeless struggle. In those days London was infested with desperadoes. People were attacked in broad daylight with bludgeons and cutlasses and robbed without anyone daring to lift a finger. At night, the town was completely under the rule of the mob; officers of the law, with warrants in their pockets and armed constables at their elbows, often flinched from making arrests for fear of being lynched. The constables were not of much use, anyway; they were mostly elderly and decrepit people, unable to make a living by 'honest work,' and could be seen more frequently in the alehouses than on patrol in the streets. London's lanes and squares were, in Henry Fielding's words, 'like a vast wood or forest in which a thief may harbour with as great security as wild beasts do in the deserts of Africa or Arabia.'

If a criminal was eventually caught, few people dared to come forward as witnesses. The gangs had their own ways of dealing with informers; sometimes they beat them up until there was not a bone left unbroken, or hung them over a dry well for a few days, then

cutting the rope and burying the unfortunate victim under a hail of stones at the bottom.

'I was sitting in my own dining-room on Sunday night,' wrote Horace Walpole, 'when I heard a loud cry of "Stop thief!"' A highwayman had attacked a post-chaise in Piccadilly; the fellow was pursued, rode over the watchman, almost killed him, and escaped.'

The greatest evil, however, was that London's judges themselves made this state of affairs possible through their corruption. Thus, it was charged against one of Fielding's predecessors by a police-officer that he 'used to issue out warrants, and take up all the poor devils in the streets, and then there was the bailing of them, two shillings and four-pence, which the magistrate kept; and taking up a hundred girls, that would make, at 2/4d a head, £11. 13. 4.' Small wonder that the job of a Justice of the Peace in London, and especially at Bow Street, was regarded as degraded and degrading. Only a strong man, fearless, arduous, and righteous, with a powerful determination, could have dared to attack the twin evils of crime and corruption.

THAT strong man was a 42-year-old writer in a deplorable state of health, who was often pushed into Court in a wheelchair, because his gout would not permit him to walk on his own feet. The sands were running out fast for Henry Fielding; he had no more than five years to live from the time he took his seat on the magistrate's bench at Bow Street. His health had troubled him for a long time, and after he had made the round of London's best doctors in vain he became an easy prey for all the town's quacks in his desperate search for some cure of his pains.

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Henry Fielding was no ivory-tower writer. In his works he described realistically the people and conditions of his time. He wrote his last novel, *Amelia*, while he was at Bow Street, and in it he painted the portrait of a weak-willed gambler who cannot keep out of the debtors' prison; but he also showed up the stupidity and brutality of a judiciary system that allowed the individual to sink so low. Fielding did not have to strain his imagination to describe the world of his hero; he conducted in person more than one raid on a gambling-house.

There was indeed no lack of material for a novelist. One day, a crowd gathered around a house of bad reputation in the Strand, where a sailor had been robbed by a woman; the mob threw the furniture into the street and set it on fire. The next day, another house was broken open, and the furniture burnt. An officer and forty soldiers could not stop the crowd from attacking a third house, and had to withdraw when the mob turned against them. Fielding sent for more troops, the main culprits were brought to trial, and one of them was sentenced to death.

Another day, Fielding had to deal with a case in which three women claimed the same husband. Then again, he sat up all night to hear the case against forty-five gamblers who had been rounded up. Soon the underworld of London noticed that this judge did not accept bribes, that he did not pocket the bail money, and that he was determined to stamp out crime by every legal means.

On other occasions, however, he showed a great deal of human sympathy. Once the purse of a country girl, with fourteen shillings in it, had been cut off. At Bow Street she told Fielding that she had come to town to see the harlequinade at the Playhouse. Now, Fielding hated the theatre, which he held responsible for much of the immorality of London—the town had three theatres and was clamouring for a fourth one. Yet the girl's grief touched his heart, and he sent out a clerk to buy her a ticket for the Playhouse gallery at the magistrate's expense.

FIELDING saw that all he could do at Bow Street under the prevailing system was no more than deal out a few drops of justice in an ocean of depravity. The Government was unwilling to act. By 1750, conditions had grown so bad that the prisons were running

out of fetters, and often two or three inmates had to be chained together. Fielding decided to rouse the public conscience by his pen. In 1751 he published *An Enquiry into the Causes of the Late Increase of Robbers*, which he hoped would force the Government into action. He started from the psychological viewpoint, speaking of the 'genius, manners, and habits of the people,' whose traditions and character were now being changed for the worse by 'the lowest and vilest properties,' and he blamed the wantonness of the entertainment which they were being offered: 'Their eyes are feasted with show and their ears with music . . . gluttony and drunkenness are allured by every kind of dainty . . . the finest women are exposed to view.' He believed the main curse to be gin, 'which I have great reason to think is the principal sustenance of more than one hundred thousand people in this metropolis.'

Then Fielding turned to the judiciary practice of the country. 'Tyburn holiday,' execution day at London's gallows, had become a horrible spectacle, in which the principal actor, the criminal, played his part before a vast audience. This morbid entertainment should be ended, proposed Fielding, and criminals executed behind prison walls.

FIELDING'S various suggestions were not carried out immediately, but the Government took notice at last of his efforts to curb London's underworld. The Privy Council made a grant to him of £600, which modest sum was to be used for breaking up the gangs of robbers and murderers. With this money the Bow Street magistrate formed England's first detective corps, the forerunners of Scotland Yard's C.I.D.

Fielding called them 'thief-takers.' They were recruited among the town's respectable householders, 'all men of known and approved fidelity and intrepidity.' He sent them on night patrols, armed with pistols, but in civilian clothes. They had to be available at any time to investigate crimes which had been brought to the notice of the court, and to discover the culprits if these were unknown.

The first case with which the thief-takers dealt successfully was that of a gang of fourteen cut-throats, who were all brought to trial. Then came a week in which Fielding, with the help of his detective force, had to investigate no less than five murders; at the

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end he was, in his own words, 'almost fatigued to death.' By 1753 he felt that 'but a short remainder of life' was allotted to him. But his work achieved the desired results. The thief-takers put the fear of God into those who lived by vice and crime, with the amazing effect that during the darkest months of 1753, November and December, not a single street robbery or murder was committed in the whole of London!

It was to be expected that the habitual criminals would try to get their own back. Once two men charged with stealing silk handkerchiefs threatened to blow out Fielding's brains; they were taken from Bow Street to Newgate Prison under armed guard. Several unsuccessful attempts were made on his life.

Fielding did not despise the employment of informers. He postponed a sorely needed cure at Bath, after an attack of jaundice, to 'demolish' a gang of villains by using the services of 'a fellow who had undertaken, for a small sum, to betray them into the hands of the thief-takers . . . After some weeks the money was paid at the Treasury, and within a few days after two hundred pounds of it had come to my hands the whole gang was entirely

dispersed, seven of them were in actual custody, and the rest driven, some out of the town, and others out of the kingdom.'

Fielding had indeed succeeded, in a remarkably short time, in making London a safer place to live in. 'Though my health was now reduced to the last extremity, I continued to act with the utmost vigour against these villains . . . But amidst all my fatigues and distresses I had the satisfaction to find my endeavours had been attended with such success that this hellish society was almost utterly extirpated,' he wrote in his last essay, *A Voyage to Lisbon*.

He was never to return from that voyage. Having lost the use of his legs, he was hoisted on board ship strapped to a chair. 'Worst of all to bear was the rough laughter of the sailors and fishermen,' he wrote. But he did not find the recuperation he was seeking in sunny Portugal. Two months after his arrival in Lisbon, on 8th October 1754, he died in his house at Junqueira overlooking the Tagus. 'The father of the English novel,' as Sir Walter Scott called him, and the man who had cleaned up London, was buried in the graveyard of Lisbon's old British factory.

Ancient British Roads

LEWIS SPENCE

THE popularity of motor traffic in Great Britain has given an impetus to descriptive and historical writing on the subject of our road-system and has been responsible for an entire literature of the road, romantic as well as merely topographical in its outlook. On the whole it is an admirable literature. But it entertains one cardinal error which loudly calls for rectification. Its authors are united in the statement that our main arteries of traffic owe their inception to the Romans, an opinion which is by no means in consonance

either with fact or with modern archaeological opinion.

It is only within the last century or so, indeed, that the mistaken notion has made headway that prior to the Roman conquest and settlement of Britain not a single highway of native construction existed within its four seas. But it is remarkable that nearly every mediaeval writer on British topography insists upon the native origin of many of our great highways, a view which quite a number of our leading archaeologists are beginning to share.

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Indeed, a growing body of evidence is now revealing itself that several traffic arteries, still of major importance, existed in Britain before the Roman period, more than one of them having been in continuous use long before the 1st century A.D. Through the recent researches of a band of qualified specialists, too, it has now been placed beyond doubt that the south-eastern portions of England had been covered with a network of highways for at least a generation before the Roman Conquest of A.D. 43.

Tradition, beneath which a substratum of fact is often to be discovered, has long cherished the legend that to the fabulous British monarchs, Dunwallo and Belinus, four great natural highways were due, one of which traversed the island to its full extent from south to north. But in this case it is obvious that the legend has been invented to chime with a certain degree of fact, for quite a number of the roads which we insist upon calling Roman were nothing but older British turnpikes or trackways reconditioned by the conquerors to suit the exigencies of a larger traffic. For example, as Sir Cyril Fred Fox has clearly shown in his *The Archaeology of the Cambridge Region*, that area could boast of several roads specially constructed for chariot traffic before the Roman period, and the researches of Professor Lethaby, Professor Parsons, and the late Dr Page have been rewarded by the revelation of a similar series of roads which existed in the neighbourhood of London in the 1st century A.D.

THE most important pre-Roman road in the island was certainly Watling Street. The course of that venerable highway is frequently confused because of the misunderstanding which prevails concerning its dual topographical character. Watling Street South and Watling Street North, originally one, seem now to be regarded as two separate roads. The street seems to have made a triple commencement at Dover, Lympne, and Richborough, the three paths from which converged at Canterbury and proceeded to London in a single highway, the northern portion running from the capital by way of Dunstable, Leicester, and Wroxeter to Chester, whence it spread in a network of tracks over Lancashire. The older antiquaries believed the name to be Celtic, but more modern research has proved it to be of Anglian or

Scandinavian origin, applying to those mythical Waetlings who were the patrons of all handicrafts and civilising agencies and who had even laid down a spiritual Watling Street in the heavens—the Milky Way. This, of course, was a later Teutonic conceit, but what may have been the first and Celtic name of the great turnpike we have no means of knowing.

For the greater part of its course this ancient road runs nearly parallel with the main line of the old London and North-Western Railway to Holyhead. But there are still other Watling Streets, in the Stretton Valley in Cheshire—probably a prolongation of the main road—and that which crosses the Wall of Hadrian, and which is really the Old Dere Street misnamed. That Watling Street was not a road of Roman origin is, I think, proved by the fact that in its more northerly portion it undoubtedly formed a part of the old boundary between the Belgic and British tribes, a fact which has not so far been taken advantage of in considering its pre-Roman character, and by the recent evidence that another portion of it was certainly constructed by Cunobelin or Cymbeline to link up London with his capital at Verulam or St Albans, as the authorities quoted above have made plain.

IF any dubiety exist as to the native beginnings of Watling Street, however, there is assuredly none as regards the origin of Icknield Street, which is believed by all competent authorities to have been a British highway of the most venerable character. It extends from the borders of Norfolk to Dorset, and that it was a trading avenue from very early times is not to be questioned, as it was never reconditioned by the Romans, although frequently made use of by them. Professor Bertram Windle of Toronto, who has made a personal study of its course, believes it to have been the main trade-route of the Iceni of Norfolk and Suffolk, who were famous horse-breeders. Along its ample course they drove their herds of ponies to the market. The late Professor Haverfield was, however, of opinion that Icknield Street, so far as its name is concerned, must not be confused with that of the Iceni, as the title is of later and Saxon origin.

Icknield Street still casts a vivid green trackway across the Berkshire Downs, passing such landmarks as the famous White Horse and Wayland Smith's Forge and is locally known as The Green Road. It traverses Watling

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Street at Dunstable, or about the centre of its course, and, after passing near Marlborough, practically fades out of existence, being literally lost in green meadows. The likelihood is that it once continued to Old Sarum, near Salisbury, and, if this be so, it may have linked up this great pre-Roman centre with another, Thetford, on the borders of Suffolk and Norfolk, which many antiquaries of the past devoutly believed to have been a flourishing British city with the resounding name of Sitomagus.

There is practically general consent that Icknield Street is of British origin. T. Codrington, the greatest modern authority on Roman roads, says that 'it has little claim to be considered Roman', although it is connected with several Roman trackways, and that it 'bears but little likeness to a Roman road, either in the laying out of the course or in construction'. Along its entire length no Roman remains are to be found, but British in abundance. Unlike most Roman roads, which were cast up in a ridge or bank, it is cut in deep trenches and reveals not a yard of pavement, unless between Newmarket and Chesterford, where it was reconstructed according to the Roman method.

PROFESSOR WINDLE lays stress on the British character of another ancient highway, Ryknield Street, which runs from Bourton-on-the-Water in Gloucestershire all the way to Aldborough, in Yorkshire, taking in Birmingham and Derby in its course. He scouts the theory that no native roads existed when the Romans took possession of Britain. These, he believes, must, indeed, have been numerous and in some cases were demonstrably in use even in the New Stone Age, though only a limited few were reconstructed by the Romans and made into first-class highways. Of this latter type of road he believes Ryknield Street to be one of the best examples which have survived to modern times.

In some parts of its route, notably in the Cotswold country, Ryknield Street is a mere track through wooded country and probably has been so for a couple of thousand years. Where it assumes this character, in the Cotswolds, it is known as Buckle Street, evidently a corruption of its original name, but almost in the middle of a field, so to speak, about a mile from Bidford, its proper title is restored to it. It crosses Birmingham at the suburb of Edg-

baston as Monument Lane. For part of its subsequent northward course it is known as The Saltway, a title it perhaps owes to the fact that supplies of salt were carried by that route from Droitwich. It was the only road which anciently traversed the once-dangerous glooms of the Forest of Arden, and by another side-track it connected with Stratford-upon-Avon, which, in fact, takes its name from the ford which linked up with 'the Straet,' or 'Street.'

MORE than one ancient road in England is known as Stane Street, but that in Sussex had most obviously a pre-Roman beginning. It ran from London to Chichester, and even to-day, environed with bricks and mortar as it is, some of those who traverse it from Newington Butts to Clapham Rise, as the writer has often done, will experience that sentiment of extreme antiquity which certain districts seem to evoke. Southward, it must have run to a gap in the Surrey Downs near Dorking, whence it penetrated the ancient forest of Anderida, fording the River Arun in its course. Indeed, more than half of its length of fifty-seven miles must formerly have traversed one of the wildest and most gloomy forests in Southern Britain, and that it was practically ignored by the Romans is revealed by the fact that not a single Roman fort or station has been discovered in its course, with the doubtful exception of Hardham, near Pulborough.

The very ancient Norfolk road known as the Peddars' Way or Walkers' Path is believed by Codrington to be of Roman origin, although there appears to be almost general agreement in other quarters that it is more probably of native construction. In truth, it seems more likely, as in other cases, that it may have been relaid by the conquerors at a later period. It seems to the writer that this latter view is substantiated by the circumstance that with one exception, that of Castle Acre, it does not pass through a single village or inhabited site, seeming most carefully to avoid all human habitation. From Holme, near Hunstanton, it runs in a south-easterly direction near Kingstead and a little farther on it passes to the west of Fring, reaching Castle Acre, south of which its course is not so clearly marked, though it has been identified at several points farther on. Nearly all the topographical writers of the end of the 19th century allude to it as an 'Icenian track-way.'

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North of Castle Acre the Peddars' Way is a metalled road twenty feet broad, but a mile or two south of that Norman and possible Roman site it becomes a green lane, and later a mere cart-track skirting arable fields. Still farther on it broadens out, but is overgrown with gorse, leaving a narrow track in the middle.

MOST decidedly British in their origin are those roads which date from the Belgic period in South Britain and which, many archaeologists are now convinced, were constructed by King Cunobelus or Cymbeline, that monarch who did his utmost to Romanise his territories before the Roman conquest. Professor Lethaby has strengthened the growing belief that the ancient highway which ran from St Albans to Aldersgate in London was laid down by Cymbeline as a roadway from his capital to an early haven which stood on the site of London, and that the trade-route from the British ports in pre-Roman times followed a course which had St Albans for its objective. Mr Page was of opinion that when Cymbeline transferred his seat of government from St Albans to Colchester, however, the change necessitated a rearrangement of the older trade-route to the new capital and a new passage was found farther to the east, at a point between London and Southwark, from which a road was driven direct to Colchester, the Roman Camulodunum.

To give this theory a very plain definition, Professor Lethaby's conclusions regarding the British and Roman road-systems around London may be summarised as follows: A primitive trackway along the North Downs near the south bank of the Thames probably existed. There was an ancient river-crossing

by a ford at Westminster and thence north-west through Britain, and on this road Verulamium was established and had connection with London as a port. There was also a direct London-Verulamium road running by way of Islington. This British road-system, he thinks, was rectified by Roman engineers and considerably added to by branch roads.

As regards the method of transport between Verulamium and Camulodunum, Professor Parsons writes: 'It must not be thought that the distance between Verulam and Camulodunum was great for a light chariot with relays of horses. It is fairly certain that there was a British road between the two places, for the Romans paved the greater part of it later on, and it is still used as one of the many Stane Streets. There were few if any obstacles between the two towns, and Cymbeline or his messengers should have passed from one to the other in little over five hours, especially as by this time the breed of horses had probably been improved.'

THE study of ancient British roads, as apart from Roman highways, is still in its beginnings. Indeed no volume has so far been wholly dedicated to its explication. But in these days of awakened curiosity such a subject cannot long await the demonstration its importance demands. Already more than one investigatory essay has indicated the need for excavation on the line of certain of our ancient highways and this appears to the writer as by far the best means of revealing by whom our venerable trackways were first made use of, tools, weapons, and coins providing the surest indication of the wayfarers along any given route, ancient or modern.

Town

*We have propped ourselves against
The crowd, and grown afraid
Of wings and starlight and the things
We have not made.*

*And since there comes, if silence falls,
A sudden splash of doubt,
We fashioned drums and wheels and walls
To shut it out.*

*So do we speed the slow blue birth
Of night with lights, and take
Neat paving-stones to hide the earth
We could not make.*

CARLA LANYON LANYON.



Zooken

JUDITH ASHE

WHENEVER my grandmother began to shake her head as she gazed reflectively into the embers of her huge coke fire we knew that another of her countless reminiscences was about to begin.

Grandmother was a slight, wrinkled old lady, as rigidly upright in build as she was in morals. She had a fund of the strangest tales that were set in her native town of Tomashov in Poland and dated back to the last century. And, since Grandmother was growing very old, she lived quite a lot of her time in the past. Always she lapsed into her native Yiddish for these anecdotes, which she told with such vividness that one could almost imagine oneself back with her in that small Polish town, living the narrow, orthodox, yet somehow curiously fascinating, life she had led in those faraway days.

'MY poor sister,' Grandmother began one winter's evening, as she drew her plain wooden, stiff-backed chair closer to the fire. 'My beloved Miriam—what she suffered. If one has the dark luck to get such a husband! May he rest now where he lies! A no-good he was; a good-for-nothing.'

Grandmother was off on one of her favourite themes. Like most hardworking people,

she had a bitter contempt for the laggard and the lazy.

Miriam's husband, she related, was by trade a *shadchen*, or professional marriage-broker. In those days, in a little Jewish community in the heart of Poland, a *shadchen* was not only recognised as following a legitimate calling; he was also regarded as a respected member of the community.

But poor Miriam's husband was respected by none, and, it was easy to see, least of all by my grandmother. 'As long as he put on his kaftan,' she said in derision, 'thought he that was all.'

The word 'kaftan' conjured up for me a picture of what I imagined the typical *shadchen* to be—a bearded figure with a wide, flat, black velour hat, and a baggy umbrella.

'He didn't want to work,' Grandmother enlarged. 'So tired he would get,' and here a bitter note of sarcasm crept into her voice.

It seemed that this pedlar in romance would start each transaction by introducing the respective parents of the potential bride and bridegroom, after which he became so fatigued that a prolonged rest-cure was essential. During his self-prescribed retirement at home with his wife the more enterprising of his competitors would step in, bring the whole business to a successful conclusion, and

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collect the commission, which was a percentage of the bride's dowry. Time after time this happened, and neither his wife's bitter tears of despair nor her anguished appeals ever made the slightest impression.

The twin results of this unfortunate infirmity of character were that the *shadchen* was always poor and his wife always pregnant. But, because of the constant anxiety she suffered, her babies had all been stillborn. Although she had given birth to five children in five years of married life, she was still childless.

'If it hadn't been for my father—may he rest in peace—who knows what would have been?' Grandmother said, and paused, lost in thought.

'Why, Grandma?' I asked. 'What did he do?'

'How could a father—and such a father—may he rest in Paradise—look to the sufferings of his child and do nothing? I ask you. Day and night he wept over her. What could he do? My father was a wise man—to interfere between husband and wife pleased him not. Yet, to look on such suffering, he could not, either. "Come home to me, my child," he said to Miriam. "Come—you, with your husband, and we'll see what will be." For that good-for-nothing—may I be forgiven for speaking so of the dead—it was ideal. To be taken in, provided for, looked after as he would be in my father's home . . . But Miriam—poor thing—again she was pregnant. "Father, father, what shall I do?" she kept on crying. "It again will be the same thing. Again the child will die—I know. Father, what can I do?"

"Don't take on so, my child," my father said, though I tell you the tears were lying in his own eyes. "Now you are here, I look after you. With God's help will you have your child, and it will live and be well—you will see." But still she cried: "What can I do? We must something do." My father looked on and thought over what he could do.'

'And then, Grandma?'

'And then my father said: "Hear me, my child. Cry no more. I go to the *Gitter Yid*. He will know—he will tell me."'

THE *Gitter Yid* was the sage; the holy patriarch to whom all believers went for help and counsel.

He listened intently while my great-grand-

father related Miriam's story. At the end he sat and pondered for a while and then, slowly, he spoke. 'Give heed to what I tell you. Your daughter should remain with you in your home till after the birth. You should keep watch over her—see that she is not worried. All should be quiet, peaceful. And later, when she shall have the child, and with God's help it lives, if it is a boy, from the first day you shall see that he is dressed in white—all white. And,' continued the sage in his mystic's voice, 'you shall let him wear white every day and every month and every year until the time when he shall ask why. Only then, when he shall ask why, should he be dressed as other boys.'

'So, so,' my great-grandfather said. 'It will certainly so be.'

'And for a name, you shall call him Zooken.'

'Zooken?' Great-grandfather repeated reflectively. 'A strange name.'

'Nevertheless, you shall call him Zooken,' insisted the *Gitter Yid*. 'Remember—Zooken. And now, go home, and God go with you.'

'And so it was,' Grandmother said. 'My father looked to my sister as though she were the two eyes in his head. And she? She came to herself. Whole days she sat and sewed—everything white—all the little garments—just as the *Gitter Yid* had directed. She sewed and she prayed. "Grant only it live, dear God, the tiny child, grant only it live."

'And did it live, Grandma?' I cried. 'Did Miriam's child live?'

Grandmother held her splayed hands over the glowing coke and edged still nearer to the fire. 'God be thanked—yes, it lived,' she said. 'A fine boy. My sister could not at all believe it. And when they showed her the child, she wept.'

'Now have you nothing to cry for,' my father told her. 'Now must you not cry. God has given you in trust a fine boy. Look only on him. Did you ever see a finer child?' My father did himself gloat over the infant. 'Now must you get strong,' he said, 'and give heed to him.'

TIME went by, and Miriam watched anxiously over her growing and healthy son. She tended him; she prayed over him. He had but to whimper and the poor woman became distraught.

'Worry not, my child,' her father would

soothe her. 'Remember what the *Gitter Yid* said. Have faith. All will be well.'

Grandmother, with her hands still held out to the warm, smoking coke, sat silent, deep in her memories.

'You mean they really did dress him in white?' I asked after a while. 'A little boy all in white?'

'Of course he was dressed in white,' she answered with some spirit, as though chiding me for the doubt my question implied. 'We dressed him in white, and we called him Zooken, as the *Gitter Yid* had commanded.'

'And for how long did he wear the white clothes?'

'He was perhaps ten or eleven,' she said, then pondered a moment. 'Yes, so I believe. He came in from school one day, his whole face lit up. "For why call they me the boy in white? Only they laugh and call me the boy in white." I tell you, the tears were nearer than the laughter.'

"S-s-sh, gently," my father soothed him. "Do you know what? Go tell your mother you like not your white clothes. Go, go. Listen to me. Go tell your mother—you will something see."

And, from that day, Zooken was dressed as the other boys.

It is said by the great Jewish sages of old that white suggests purity, and so, presumably, the clothes were to be a safeguard against the devil and his evil signs on the life of Miriam's son, and when the boy became conscious of them their purpose had been served.

'And why Zooken?' I asked. 'Why did he have to be called Zooken?'

'Zooken, my child,' Grandmother answered solemnly, 'means "old man".'

'You mean,' I cried, 'they called a little boy "old man"?"

'So did we call him—so had the *Gitter Yid* said. "Old man" . . . I wonder what does now with him,' she murmured, ruminating.

I also wondered, even though it was difficult for me to believe that there had ever really been such a child as Zooken. Not that I would have doubted my grandmother's word; but the tale of 'the boy in white' seemed to me rather like a myth, and its hero a mythical being.

THEN it happened that later that year, the summer of 1924, to be precise, our

neighbour, Mr Rosen, brought his widowed sister over from Poland. We soon learnt that Mrs Plinsky, the new immigrant, had come from Tomashov.

Grandmother lost no time in seeking her out. 'Perhaps you heard some time of one Zooken?' she asked in Yiddish.

To my complete amazement, Mrs Plinsky cried, also in Yiddish, 'Zooken! But of course know I Zooken—the boy in white. Mm—Zooken,' she repeated in a nostalgic sing-song, 'know I Zooken—mm—Zooken.' After a few moments of this she asked: 'And from where know you Zooken?'

'I? I shouldn't know Zooken—my sister's son!'

'Your sister's son,' breathed Mrs Plinsky. 'Ah, so.'

'What news is from him?' Grandmother inquired eagerly. 'Since my poor sister died—peace be upon her—I don't hear.'

'God be thanked—from Zooken have you nothing to worry. A fine living makes he. For why not? Such a tailor as he! I tell you, all the workshops tear themselves apart for him.' Mrs Plinsky's sing-song voice stopped, whilst her head wagged from side to side, telling even more eloquently than her words of Zooken's success.

Grandmother beamed and nodded her head also in silent satisfaction.

But for me—what disenchantment! My fairy-tale hero, 'the boy in white,' had grown up to become a tailor, an ordinary common or garden tailor. Well, maybe not an ordinary tailor, but a tailor just the same. The boy whose magical birth and charmed life had been so strangely romantic that I had hardly believed in his existence was now leading a most un-magical life and working in an ordinary workshop, like the dozens of exceedingly dull men I saw every day of my life shuffling to their jobs. It was a complete let-down, an impossible end for a charmed and charming beginning.

'Such a fine woman his wife—such a fine woman!' I heard Mrs Plinsky as though from a distance. 'And his children—may they only live and be healthy! Good children has he. Good and clever. You can imagine how he gloats over them.'

Wife . . . children . . . good children . . . he gloats . . . All ordinary—so ordinary!

But Grandmother radiated pleasure. 'Of course, of course—for why not?' she said with deep, quiet pride. And then, in sad remem-

brance, she added softly: 'My sister ought to have lived to see it. Poor thing! Not so old altogether was she when she died. Only for such things did she pray for her son. Not any fortunes or fancies did she ask for him. Only he should live and be well. For what prays a mother? That she should live to her son's *barmitzvah* . . . he should married be . . . a good living he should make.'

I was quite overcome by the boredom of it all.

'Blessed to overflowing would she be, my beloved Miriam. Her Zooken himself a father! Ai, ai—the pride she would carry.'

The quiet fervour in Grandmother's voice impressed her words on me in spite of myself. Why was she so delighted with this prosaic sequence of events? I wondered. Everybody worked and married and had children. Well—not *quite* everybody. What about poor Sophie Baum up the street, who longed to work and marry, but could do neither, because she had diabetes so badly; or my own aunt who so much wanted children, but had had an operation and never would have any. Somewhat dimly, I began to suspect that there was perhaps more to all the everyday things one accepted as a matter of course. I could see that to my grandmother these commonplaces,

particularly as related to Zooken, were precious.

Suddenly I thought: Of course, he might not have lived at all! None of Miriam's other children had. Then I began to see more clearly. So bitter had been Miriam's grief at the death of each successive child that her most extravagant and passionate prayer had been only that this child should live and grow up healthy—just that and nothing more. And now, here was Mrs Plinsky telling us that everything Miriam had prayed for had come to pass.

My disappointment was gone. Not that I had at that moment a clear realisation of the situation. I was too young for that. But my adolescent mind had vaguely, and, to some extent, unwillingly, understood what later it accepted completely. In the fulfilment of Miriam's prayer, in the normal, healthy, ordinary life that Zooken now led, and not in his name or even in his white clothes, lay the real magic. That was, after all, the only fitting end to the fairy-tale.

'Well, thank God for that,' Grandmother said, as we went off together. She lapsed into a satisfied sing-song. 'You see, my child, the *Gitter Yid* knew. Ai, ai, did he know. May he only rest in Paradise!' And she walked on, reflecting and wagging her head.

A Link with an Indian Past

CHARLES STUART

WITH the extinction of the old East India Company nearly a century ago and the replacement of the old order by the new, much of the glamour of the East departed. The ruthless efficiency and hidebound complexities of the new competition wallahs were an indifferent substitute for the adventurous spirit and individualism of the pioneers of the previous two centuries.

Old John Company was unashamedly a

trading corporation and in keeping with its poor rates of pay it expected its servants to provide for their own old age and families. Events passed beyond the Company's control, however, and the enormous expansion which took place in the latter half of the 18th century brought a proportionate increase in the size of its army and in the number of its officials. Yet the only attempt to cope with the problem of improvident and necessitous employees and

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dependents was made by the much-vilified Lord Clive, who donated his entire estate for that purpose, arranging, however, for its reversion to his heirs in the event of a possible transfer of the Company to the State.

Cases of destitution in the Madras Army became so numerous and pressing in the early 1800s that the officers of that service combined to deal with the problem on something more than a short-time basis, and, with official approval, they launched the Madras Military Fund in 1808 to provide their families with pensions and other benefits, such as passage-money. Subscriptions based on rank, or length of service for chaplains, with donations for special events, brought widows equivalent annuities and provided for children till they attained the age of twenty-one. An annual grant of 5000 pagodas, about £2000, from the Court of Directors gave the Fund a flying-start and, though admission for the first few years was voluntary, it was generously supported; the difficult initial stages were eased by grants from interested parties and substantial bequests from the estates of unmarried officers. As rates of interest in India were extremely high, the finances of the new Fund were soon in a flourishing state.

The success of the Madras Fund led to the good example being soon copied by the armies of the other Presidencies and also by the civilian side, so that by the time of the Sikh and Afghan Wars some half-score of separate funds were established, well equipped to deal with something more than a normal strain on their resources.

ALTHOUGH among the funds the scales of contributions and benefits naturally varied considerably with Presidency and service, the basic principles of the funds were similar. A brief outline of the senior, Madras, will serve as an example of them all. The standard of measurement was the rupee, the universal coin of India, then worth about 8 to the £ sterling, but which for this particular fund was taken at $8\frac{1}{2}$. Invested funds, as has already been indicated, earned a high rate of interest.

Rank, from cornet to colonel, formed the foundation for the six classes, the widows of which received annuities ranging from £93 to £250; children got £20 till they were six, £30 till twelve, and then £40 up to twenty-one, with a 50 per cent increase if motherless.

Married subscribers and widowers with offspring paid subscriptions varying from 9 to 64 rupees a month in India on full pay; from 8s. to 37s. 6d. a month in Europe on leave; the unmarried paid two-thirds of these rates. In addition, fines, humorously styled 'donations,' rendered expensive such special events as promotion to a higher class, marriage, and the birth of children. The scientifically-graduated scale clipped cornets and ensigns Rs.300 and colonels Rs.550 each time they stepped up: if they were married, it was twice as much, except for the junior ranks: whilst twice as much again was exacted on entrance into wedlock, plus, if rashly contracted with one eight or more years junior, the rigours of a disparity table; in brutal figures, a colonel of sixty would have to stump up some 700 or 800 golden sovereigns to indulge his fancy for a damsel of twenty. However, the fund management tempered the wind by giving a cash discount of 10 per cent or, subject to interest at 8 per cent, allowed payment to be spread over a period of twenty-five months. Optional additional and extra donations of a little over £30 each could ensure an increase of 50 per cent in the children's pensions above the age of twelve, continuing, in the case of daughters, till they were married. One useful clause provided widows passage to England—or, in lieu, Rs.1500 for widows, Rs.250 for children—whilst officers on the active list could obtain loans for passage or equipment or both, repayable, with interest of course, by instalments. It will thus be seen that 'The Funds' from an Indian standpoint possessed a far different meaning from that attaching to the term in England at the same period.

The Government of India Act of 1859, which brought the old East India Company to an honoured end and substituted direct rule, had a clause guaranteeing all servants of the Company full existing rights at the date of transfer. This meant that the take-over of the subscription funds with their assets ensured that any future variations in rates and conditions could only be in favour of the members. The stabilisation of the rupee at the $2\frac{1}{3}\frac{1}{4}$ rate of exchange later became a privilege of considerable value.

The new broom, of course, soon got busy. It swept clean. Slain were the Bengal Military Fund and Orphan Society, the Madras Military and Medical Funds, the Bombay Military Fund, the Indian Navy Fund. The arrogant civilian funds, with their provision

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of £1000 down for daughters when they were married, also went into the melting-pot. Gone too, were their assets, which, merged into general revenues, soon became 'lost to sight, to memory dear', their founder trustees lacking the prescience of Lord Clive to ensure against the not too improbable event of the funds becoming Government concerns. After acute labouring-pains extending well over a dozen years, the new rulers brought forth twin horrors which they characteristically christened 'The Indian Military Services Family Pension Fund' and 'The Indian Civil Services Family Pension Fund,' giving considerably less in benefits for considerably greater cost. In the attempt to replace administrative convenience by actuarial exactness, the new funds were subject to quinquennial valuations, which provided civil servants with opportunities too good to miss; subscribers and beneficiaries seldom knew exactly where they stood or for how long.

THIS all too brief sketch of the old Indian Funds might be rounded off with a few stories of those 'good old days'. In the 'sixties, an enterprising mama would pack off, or accompany, her eligible daughters on the long voyage round the Cape to India with a well-defined plan, beginning at Calcutta. Elderly Indian colonels were particularly susceptible to the charms of fresh young England misses. Anxiety to prove their love and virility by a perpetual round of gaieties usually led them to an early grave and the relicts to the satisfying pension of £318, 4s. 6d. and any assets they had been unable to expend. Fascinating young widows who, in that odious but expressive modern phrase, 'knew their onions' would proceed to shake the dust of Calcutta from their feet and stage a repeat at Madras. With the Bengal pension reviving on second widowhood the designing young female would thus put a further £250 plus into the bag. For the real huntress there was yet another world to conquer, in Bombay. Though the famed Poona colonels (dead) were only worth a mere £205 per annum, still, they made quite a useful addition. Many widows returned triumphantly home under the age of fifty with annuities aggregating nearly £800 coupled with nice little nest-eggs, which, from their point of view, could not be regarded as altogether unsatisfactory, especially as income-tax was under sixpence. The really sad case was that of the lady who, after gleec-

fully landing her fourth, a civilian, had the mortification to predecease him and so to fail to grab an additional big prize of £400 a year.

One strong-minded lady stipulated as the price of her hand that each fresh husband prefix the name of his predecessor, and emerged from the fray as Mrs Grey-Everitt-Rossiter. Another had a passion for double-barrels, and proudly sailed home as Mrs Courtenay Doyle-Playden Beauchamp-Maxwell Wedekind, and, to everyone's annoyance, insisted on signing the lot in full on all documents and cheques.

One old boy, without kith or kin, and who must have been born in Scotland, was so upset on his deathbed when he realised that over fifty years' subscriptions were going to be wasted that he wedded his cook with only twenty-four hours to spare. Let us hope she was a good cook. Another case had a more amusing sequel. General Keen—we'll call him that—in his ninety-first year conceived such a passion for a Bright Young Thing that he stumped up donation and disparity to the extent of over £1200. The lady, finding someone more congenial, a year or so later obtained a nullity decree, so the general asked for his money back. Though under the rules this sort of thing wasn't done, the fund directors, in the circumstances, obtained a special dispensation. Before, however, they had repaid the cash, the aforesaid B.Y.T. said: 'Hullo! What's going on here? I lent that money to my ex-husband, and, if anybody's going to get it, it's me—so there.' This sent the authorities into yet another huddle and before they had got out of it her mother butted in and claimed that, as she had lent the money to her daughter to lend to her husband, she, and she only, should be the recipient. That fairly upset the applecart and the incident ended with everyone completely dissatisfied except officialdom and the fund with the inharmonious name.

Madras widows in this country can—if there are any left—invoke the passage-money clause in the rules and obtain Rs.1500, £160 odd, at the stereotyped rate of exchange, on production of a steamship ticket to India. Before the war a first-class P. & O. return left a very comfortable margin for pocket-money. Alas, a lady can only perform the operation once and there cannot be many eligible widows left.

Ah, well, the old Indian Funds had their day and served their purpose. In our times we shall not look upon their like again.

Buried Treasure of the Burman Evacuation

LAWRENCE DAWSON

I HAVE often been asked how an agricultural bank came to be possessed of so much treasure. The short answer is that it was operating in Burma. The Burmese, men and women, dress in silks and love jewellery. I tried to persuade the bank's customers that it was wrong to spend savings in gold and diamonds when the money could be put to productive uses. These seeds of economic principle, however, fell on stony ground, ground in which were strongly rooted custom and tradition.

A young landowner who had studied economics at the University of Rangoon took up the cudgels against me. He pointed out that saving was not possible in an area where banks did not operate in villages. 'Why not buy a safe,' I said, 'to store your savings till such time as you come for supplies to town, where you can also make deposits in a bank?'

'I have had sad experience with safes,' he replied. 'They serve only to attract dacoits, who force you to give up your keys.'

He then proceeded to make the following points: Jewels were of small bulk and were safer hidden in the ground. Their possession, like that of silks, gave to the wearers an aesthetic satisfaction and also a certain prestige among their own folk. During two world wars, when it was most needed, it was difficult to borrow money in the Delta except on gold and jewellery. The effect of the wars was to raise the price of gold to such a high premium that Burmans could discharge their debts by selling a mere handful of their less valued trinkets. And he wound up his arguments by telling me that I had made myself extremely unpopular with his wife!

I was unconvinced by the man's arguments, but the banker's instinct that one can push a point too far made me desist. Lending on

gold was not a business that we could decline, as gold was certainly a liquid asset, and as such helped us to balance our main assets, which were agricultural lands. A banker in Rangoon, speaking of assets, once told me that these, in so far as they were agricultural lands, were not liquid except in the rains, when they were covered with water!

THE story of the buried treasure begins on 26th February 1942. We had eight branches in the Delta and were preparing for evacuation. We had collected all our securities and our gold and could not wait any longer. The Japanese invasion from the south had been successful. The last battle in defence of Rangoon had been fought and lost. Rangoon had been evacuated and our troops were retreating to the north. Mandalay, which was our destination, was over 400 miles to the north. We proceeded by river and did not arrive there till the 8th of March.

All the Rangoon banks had moved early by rail to Mandalay and had established themselves in the available sites. The hill station, Maymyo, was for us the next possibility, 45 miles to the east. I had a house there, which I expected to be vacant, but when we arrived at it with a train of bullock-carts and our baggage I found that it was occupied by six doctors of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Maymyo was overcrowded. People from Rangoon were camping out under trees and on the lawns of many houses, and, as my house, 'Oakhurst,' had been requisitioned, I was in a quandary as to what should be done.

While in this plight I had the good fortune to meet Mr Derry, a resident of Maymyo, who had been acting for a long time as the agent of my property. He had heard of the requisition

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and, knowing that I wanted the house, was on the way to it to complain that he had not been served with a notice for the requisition. I knew that it would not be easy to turn the military out and asked Derry what he could do for us. He said he had a house that was close to his own, which I could have. This solved our problem. As the sequel will show, it enabled us to solve another problem which was more important.

THE house was known as 'Weybridge.' It was large enough to accommodate all of us and also provided us with enough room for an office. The news that the bank had reopened soon spread and we were kept fairly busy for some time paying out money to our customers.

We had our radio-receiver installed and were depressed with the news that the Japanese had reached the oil-fields, that our troops were hard pressed, that Toungoo had fallen, and that the last-ditchers in Rangoon, having blown up the oil-tanks and demolished the B.O.C. refinery and the equipment of the more important wharves, had left by steamer for Calcutta.

We realised that the Japanese army was likely soon to overrun Upper Burma and that we would not be able to transport our gold out of the country. There were convoys leaving Maymyo daily for Shwebo, where only women and children were being evacuated by air. The congestion at Shwebo was so great, and the accommodation so poor, that many people, giving up all hope of getting away by air, had started to trek from Burma through Assam for India.

I began training for the trek and making plans for the disposal of the bank's records and our treasure. I realised that the gold would have to be buried, and bought a forty-gallon oil-drum of iron, which would hold all that we had of gold and jewels. Derry's wife had jewellery and I was certain that Derry was not likely to trek with such valuables. I knew Derry to be thoroughly trustworthy and wished to consult him. His house was back to back with 'Weybridge' and afforded easy access. I passed by the back way to his house and noticed that, leaning against the back wall of his dwelling-house, there was a storeroom, from which I heard sounds as of someone digging, and at once I guessed that Derry was making a hidey-hole

for his wife's jewels. I went to the front of his house, where I met his wife, and asked her if I could see her husband. She told me to call in the evening as he was at the moment very busy. This confirmed my surmise. I returned by the way I had come and paused at the storeroom, from which I heard a sound as of a spade shovelling gravel. I then shouted: 'Derry, come out. I want to see you.' He emerged with a sheepish look and closed the door behind him. 'I imagine you are making a pit for your wife's jewels. May I see it?' I asked. He thereupon opened the door and let me in.

I WAS surprised to find that Derry had constructed a large and elaborate pit, more like a grave. It was six feet by three, and six feet deep, and the sides were lined with reinforced-concrete walls. He mentioned that his wife had two sewing-machines and a lot of finery which she wanted to bury, and that these had to be protected from the damp. I looked into the pit and observed that the bottom had not a concrete bed. Derry said that he was about to attend to that. I told him that I thought the concrete walls had been carried too high and, as the storeroom had cement floor, cracks would in time show on the surface. He said that they would not show, as it was his intention to break up the floor and have the whole of the surface relaid with cement. I asked him what would be the cost when finished, and when he gave me the figure I told him that I also wanted to use the pit and would be pleased to pay him the whole of the cost, and something more, if he would agree to my conditions.

'What do you want to bury?' he asked.

'The bank's gold,' I replied. 'I have bought an oil-drum which will contain it, and I would like you to dig a hole in the bed of the pit before you cover it with concrete.'

'I don't think that will be necessary,' he insisted.

'Well, those are my conditions,' I said, 'and if you accept them I shall give you also a commission on the value of my stuff, provided, of course, I am able to recover it when the war ends.'

'What is the value of your stuff?' he queried.

'About seven or eight lakhs of rupees.'

'And the rate of commision?'

'Two per cent.'

He then accepted, telling me, on my asking

BURIED TREASURE OF THE BURMAN EVACUATION

him, that he had had the help of his gardener, who had left for India for good and who believed his story that his aunt was dying and that the pit was to be her grave.

'Does any other person know?' I asked.

'My wife, of course, knows.'

I pledged him to silence and asked him not to disclose the new secret of the pit even to his wife.

He promised, and I trusted him.

Later in the day I paid Derry the cost of the pit, and after taking the dimensions of the drum he went to work, but not without a little grumble about the unnecessary labour I had imposed on him.

THERE still remained the serious question of the trek to India. I felt that as I was approaching the seventies I might not be able to stay the course and the hardships of the trek across Assam. I had heard that a Chinese plane was carrying cadets from China to India, where they were taken for training, and wondered if I could get a lift on one of these planes. The Chinese Consul-General lived close by. I resolved to call on him. He received me courteously, but when I mentioned the question of the lift he said that there were strict orders on the subject and that, however much he was willing to help me, he could do nothing in the matter.

I accepted the situation and our conversation then became general in character. The Consul-General was most affable. When I rose to take my leave, he happened to mention the name of one, Mr Rayson Chen, a Chinese banker, and asked me if I knew him. I said I did, and that he had come to me in 1937 to inquire if I could help him to find suitable premises for the Bank of China in Rangoon, and that I had offered him our Rangoon premises in Phayre Street, which were on the ground-floor. I had explained that we had no special need of a ground-floor and that, as we had a lien on the floor immediately above our own, we could go into that. The Consul-General with these clues was able to address me by name.

He told me that Mr Rayson Chen was a man of great influence in China and a personal friend of the Generalissimo. He said he thought that in the circumstances he as Consul-General could do something for me and asked me to wait. He went into his office and shortly after reappeared with a letter which he

delivered to me, saying that he had informed the agent of the Chinese National Airways Company at Lashio that I was to be allowed to travel to Calcutta.

Exhilarated by my good luck, I was spurred to accomplish the task of burying the treasure. The hole had been dug in the pit and the oil-drum had been fitted into it. The night chosen for the purpose was one in which there was no moon. We buried it darkly at dead of night, without, so far as we knew, being seen or heard. The gold was lowered in buckets and the drum filled almost to its brim. Derry completed the task by covering the bottom of the pit and the drum with concrete. It was a job well done, but none of us attempted to assess the chances of its being undone.

These chances were numerous. The members of our staff and our servants, some of whom were residents of Maymyo, were well aware that we arrived from the Delta with treasure. The great weight alone of the two steel chests in which we brought our gold, to say nothing of our vocation as bankers, must have aroused speculation in a much wider circle. We knew that most of the residents in Maymyo and many who had arrived from Rangoon, when they discovered that the only way to get out was to trek, were engaged in similar operations, and were being spied upon. The bankers in Mandalay, through their offices in Calcutta, were able to charter planes for the transport of their books and valuables. We had no offices in Calcutta and had no option.

THE rest of the story can now briefly be told. We arrived in Calcutta by air, travelling at night to avoid interception by Japanese planes. I left India and arrived in Edinburgh in August 1942. In the winter of 1942 the tide of war turned in our favour. In 1945 Burma was being reconquered by the British forces.

Mr Derry had evacuated to India and there remained. I received a letter from him in October 1945 to say that he had had news from Burma. His brother-in-law was in the Civil Affairs Service (Burma) and had visited Maymyo. He had written to the effect that the 'grave' had been discovered and was empty. Derry said in his letter to me that he could not tell me whether the bank's treasure was safe, as his brother-in-law, not being in the secret, had said nothing about it.

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I had been asked by the Burma Office in London to draw up a scheme for the extension of the bank's activities beyond the Delta. The scheme was drawn up and had been approved, so I went out to Burma in December 1945 to carry out this scheme, taking with me a chartered accountant from the firm who were our auditors.

We arrived in Rangoon early in February 1946, and within a week of our arrival I was in Maymyo. It was dusk when we arrived, but my impatience was so great that before doing anything else I wanted to see the site of the cache, and so we drove straight to 'Weybridge.' The hide was lying open and was half-full of water. My heart sank. Had the water welled up from below or come from the surface? If from below, the concrete bed must have been breached. I searched for a long bamboo and found one. Anxiously I probed the depths and found that the bed was intact!

Early on the following morning I arrived on the scene with a squad of armed police and another of pioneers, obtained from an Indian pioneer regiment stationed at Maymyo. They were equipped with buckets and ropes, pickaxes and shovels. The drum had prevented level settlement of the concrete and the concrete bed bulged just above it. The water was bailed out in twenty minutes, but it took

two and a half hours for the pickaxes to do the work of cutting a large circle out of the concrete bed, above the drum.

When this was done, and the cover of the drum removed, what met our eyes was a gleaming mass of yellow metal! The small cotton bags into which articles comprising a pledge were placed had disintegrated owing to the moisture of the pit, and diamond buttons and large diamond-studded gold earrings, ruby and emerald rings, solid-gold anklets and bracelets covered the surface and were intertwined with a waist-belt of golden sovereigns, and entangled with them were pendants of gold mohurs and of the 10 and 20 gold dollar pieces of the U.S.A.! There were only lacking the pieces of eight, which Long John Silver so much coveted. Indeed, the drum looked more like a pirate's hoard than the hiding-place of the securities of an agricultural bank.

We were able to restore to our surprised customers their beloved ornaments, whose value had more than doubled while in the pit. The loss which Mr Derry sustained was made good by the compensation he obtained. The simple ruse had succeeded. The finders obviously did not suspect that they had not obtained all that had been hidden. It did not occur to them that the greater prize was deeper still.

Alleyways

*In the jagged ends of street-corners
I see her haunting smile.
Pattering steps recede
Down alleyways and labyrinthine mews.
A shawl flutters in the wind
Blowing from the river,
Scurrying the leaves along the narrow streets
In whirls and little noisy silences.
Tasselled fringes lifting in the wind,
Wind-lifted ragged hair.
Here, as I turn the corner,
She will come back, I know,
And beckon down the silent alleyways;
Create once more
From some miasmic mist,
Some hidden corner of the world's dark mind,
The image Adam knew and bowed before
In Paradise.*

K. D. NAYAR.



Hubert—Captain's Cat

RUSSELL CAMERON

HUBERT was a snob among cats. We became acquainted—nothing more—when I was twelve years old and had gone as an apprentice on one of the last of our great sailing-ships.

At home, I had been taught from earliest days to show great respect towards my mother's dignified old cat, and we were the best of pals. So it was with much surprise, and rather hurt feelings, that I found my most delicately friendly gestures towards Hubert treated by him as positively contaminating insults. He was, in fact, not only a snob—he was the finest example of snobbishness that has ever come my way, whether animal or human.

Among all the other cats on board, Hubert was the acknowledged King—only he apparently disdained even to notice this homage. For was he not the Captain's Cat—or, rather, did he not own the Captain? And was not the Captain quite above all lesser forms of creation? Hubert had no doubts whatsoever on these points.

He was an exceptionally large animal, with a velvety black coat and big white shirt-front and forepaws. In his toilet he was particular to the last degree, and rather gave the impression of having been just returned from the cleaners.

He positively adored our Captain—who was certainly one of the finest men I've ever known, and cats are reputedly good judges of human nature. Perhaps, too, it was our Captain's great love for his cat that caused Hubert to disdain the advances of all lesser mortals. The strong friendship between them had been sealed years before, when the Captain himself had devotedly nursed his cat through a bad attack of distemper.

At any rate, whether accompanying the Old Man on his walks round the poop, or in fine weather sunning himself on its deck and keeping half-an-eye on his idol, Hubert positively oozed smugness and complacency, while his purring sounded like a small vacuum-cleaner.

DESPITE Hubert's disdainful rejection of all advances by the crew, he realised that his official position called for good manners, and his master's personal friends were received quite graciously by him. We always felt he was able to count the four gold bands on the sleeve of any brother-Captain who might come aboard, since mere superintendents or directors were only just tolerated, and no hand but that of a Captain was ever permitted to stroke the silky black coat.

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One slight exception only was made to this strict rule—the cook came *just* within the bounds of recognition, though even here Hubert displayed his powers of differentiation. It appeared that, in his view, the cook was just a useful cog in the machinery that made life run smoothly and pleasantly for His Highness, Hubert. Still, since due acknowledgment of this service usually meant some specially tasty titbit, the cook was permitted to extend a hand and gently rub the tickly bits under the ears and chin—but the royal back remained sacred to *Captains only*.

Throughout five years I made every attempt to win from this remarkable animal some small recognition or, at least, kindly tolerance. But even after I had been absent for a year, sailing for part of my time under another Captain, Hubert gave only the faintest sign that he had ever seen me before. However, after becoming senior apprentice, I was received into the very outermost fringes of his regard—I was permitted to give the merest touch to the tickly bits at the side of his chin, while he remained as unresponsive as a black-and-white image.

ALTHOUGH Hubert spent much time dozing on the poop in fine weather, the royal feline bed in the Captain's own quarters was a basket designed for the maximum of comfort, well up from the floor, and complete with blankets that were aired even more frequently than those of us apprentices.

Our Captain usually dined alone, and one of Hubert's ritual duties was to keep him company, sitting on the table on a special mat near his right hand, and purring the while in a soft, well-bred tone, that indicated his pleasure at being alone with his master during this agreeable ceremony, quite apart from the dainty titbit or two that he knew would be forthcoming before the meal was over. These were always received by him with an air of pleasurable surprise.

HUBERT had occasionally to exercise his authority over the other ship's cats, of which we had quite a number. Each cat on board adopts some special territory of his own, together with its crew, and guards it jealously against all others.

Now, adjoining Hubert's domain was that of Tiger—a great, good-natured animal almost

the size of Hubert himself, but of an attractive tawny hue. When he joined our ship he had, of course, to take up his quarters in that section whose catlessness had been responsible for his presence amongst us—but he had a great deal to learn, especially about his royal neighbour.

Possibly he was at first unsure of the exact limits of his territory, and for several days he occasionally eyed the little stairway that led up from his own quarters. At length he decided to see where it went, and cautiously made his way up the steps—unaware that at the top Hubert lay on the poop-deck in the sunshine, a perfect picture of smugness.

Tiger had actually placed his forepaws on the edge of the sacred area when Hubert opened one eye a little wider and saw what was happening. For a moment he stared unbelievingly, positively aghast at the audacity of the trespasser. I was on duty with the Captain at the time and could almost read Hubert's thoughts. 'Cheek! Never known such a thing! *I'll* show him!' And a raging bundle of fury hurled itself across the deck at the intruder.

It didn't take poor Tiger long to make up his mind as to the wisest course of action. As that concentrated skinful of rage rushed, snarling, towards him, it took him but a split-second to descend the stairway and retreat to the farther side of his own area.

Hubert drew himself up at the top of the stairway. He was too dignified, even in rage, to break the laws of territory, or to indulge in unnecessary recriminations. He just stood there, clearly cat-monarch of all he surveyed, tail fluffed out to twice its usual size, while his expression proclaimed his satisfaction at having prevented any real contamination by such offal of the feline race; also his obvious intention of rending to ribbons any such who *did* try to commit this scandalous breach of propriety.

Then, with a final spit and snarl in the direction of the unfortunate Tiger, who had certainly been innocent of the enormity of his crime until shown it so clearly, Hubert turned away and stalked across to report to his Captain. In miaow-miaow language he told him all about it, and received in return a lot of fussing and stroking, with the comforting commendations of being a 'good cat' and a 'beautiful cat,' which compliments Hubert accepted with the dignity of being quite well aware of such facts.

TIGER, however, was soon on very good terms with all the other cats—at least in the common meeting-grounds of main-deck, alleyways, stairways, and, of course, the galley. And he was careful never to trespass into any other cat's territory unless invited, and such occasions do occur sometimes. Usually each cat takes a pride in dealing single-handed with the rats in his own domain, but sometimes a great buck-rat may make its appearance, necessitating a special secret summons to the cats of the adjoining areas, who may then—but only then—rush to the aid of their neighbour. And when this happens, that rat's end will come swiftly and unpleasantly.

Hubert alone retained the distinction of never needing help. He was a great ratter; but of course he never ate his kills. None of our cats ever did, indeed, since only a starving cat will eat rat-flesh, and the well-fed animal hunts with infinitely greater gusto. Hubert's spoils were always carried straight to his Captain and laid lovingly at his feet. He was then rewarded by extra-special fussing and stroking, and the most emphatic terms of appreciation. Yet, in spite of Hubert's many trophies, there was never found on him the slightest sign of bite or scratch of rat.

Hubert was indeed King of the Cats on board our ship—and he knew it.

Colour Psychology

RICHARD SERVICE

FROM experiments made over the last twenty years in hospitals, factories, and offices experts have been discovering just how deeply our lives are influenced by colours. They have found that colour can stimulate or depress, give us an appetite or make us feel ill. It can affect our thoughts and emotions, our health, and even our efficiency. An experiment made in America recently showed the effect of colours on muscular activity. The activity of a group of workers under normal lighting conditions was established at 23 units. Under blue lights, however, activity increased to 24; green brought it to 28; and yellow jumped it to 30; but the scarlet lights rocketed activity to 42, ninety per cent above the normal. And this is the colour that says 'Stop'!

Scientists have long known the influence of colour on the mind. They have used red, the stimulating colour, in rooms that have been set aside for the treatment of people suffering from severe melancholia. Though seldom completely cured, the patients have often

revealed a new enthusiasm and awareness. Blue has the opposite effect, and its calming influence has often been used as a psychological sedative for people who are over-stimulated.

Several of our senses are apparently affected by colours. That some colours can give an illusion of warmth was demonstrated several years ago at a Canadian electrical factory where the workers had threatened to go on strike because the factory was too cold. Yet, when the temperature was checked it was found to be normal. At the week-end, however, painters were brought in to change the paint on the walls from green to cream. On Monday, though there had been no change in the heating, the workers remarked on the rise in temperature.

In another factory, where the workers were checking green and yellow cans, there was a sudden jump in the sickness-rate. It was then found that a wall background had been repainted, the new colour clashing so badly with the cans as to produce colour sickness.

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Yellow is one colour that will quickly promote sickness. It has been avoided in the decorative schemes of air-liners, for at speed yellow induces indigestion amongst many air-travellers.

A colour expert once experimented with colour at a dinner to show the effect on people's minds by suggestion alone. The food was excellent, prepared by a first-class chef; there was music and soft lights. However, by the use of special filters, the host eliminated all colours except green and red. Thus, the brown juicy steaks seemed grey, the coffee yellow, and the celery pink. Some of the guests did in fact complain of feeling ill after trying to eat the transformed food.

Another intriguing experiment with a more serious purpose was undertaken some years ago by the London authorities in their attempt to reduce the number of suicide leaps from Blackfriars Bridge. A colour expert suggested painting the sombre black framework a bright green. Within a short time the number of suicides had decreased remarkably. The bright appearance of the bridge no longer induced the depressed to utilise it for a farewell-to-life jump.

MANUFACTURERS have found it necessary to consider people's dislikes of certain colours. British pin-exporters were once alarmed at the low sales of their products in China. They discovered that the Chinese disliked the dark blue paper binding the pins, for blue is a colour the Chinese associate with mourning. White is another colour associated with mourning in China. When an American oil-company painted its petrol-stations white, trade slumped alarmingly, picking up only when the colour was changed. British car-manufacturers could not sell red cars in a South American republic, because red is a colour reserved for fire-engines.

In America many highly-paid colour consultants are in frequent demand by leading U.S. firms. One expert suggested to sceptical directors of a Chicago meat-firm that they should change the colour of the walls in the display-room and also change the colour of the sawdust. He insisted that the white walls showed up the meat in a greyish hue. 'Paint the walls blue-green and it will accentuate the redness of the meat,' he said, also recommending green sawdust. Sales immediately jumped when the new colour scheme was introduced,

for the colour of the walls was now the natural complement of the meat, which stood out clearly and tantalisingly.

Restaurants, too, were soon finding it profitable to make colour changes. A cafeteria started serving its salads on green plates, an innovation that had the effect of suggesting bigger and greener salads. A large store focussed red lights on its bacon display and people bought forty per cent more because it looked so appetising. Blue lights on fish rocketed fish sales.

A factory turning out office stationery changed to pale green paper, ruled in soft brown and dark green instead of the usual red and blue. Sales jumped immediately because bookkeepers found that there was less reflected glare on the new paper. Many shrewd statistical firms know that we are more likely to fill in a pink reply-card than one of cold, distant blue.

Psychologists have found that an article painted red or black will seem heavy, but if coloured light blue or yellow it will appear much lighter. At a packing-factory the workers maintained that the new black cases they were handling were far too heavy, despite the insistence of the management that they were no heavier than the old type. Future deliveries, however, were painted light brown, and the workers were soon commenting how much lighter these were.

Industrialists are becoming convinced that brightly-coloured machines can be an aid to increased production. Many now hold that even the corrosive-resisting paint in their factories should be as bright as possible, for all humans prefer to work in bright surroundings. Furthermore, variations in colour can assist in speedy identification, minimise danger, and identify functions. The British Standards Institution has recommended the introduction of a colour scheme for service communications, such as cables, ducts, hot and cold pipes. Every pipe would have a distinctive colour which would ensure infallible recognition at a glance.

Certain colours have repellent effects on insects. Colour experts have found that barnacles, which cost shipping-companies thousands of pounds every year, settle in fewer numbers on hulls that are painted light green. A food-manufacturer who painted one window of his factory blue as a screen against the sun's ultra-violet rays noticed that the flies were soon avoiding that window.

Twice-Told Tales

XLVI.—Cholera in Genoa

[From *Chambers's Journal* of October 1854]

THOSE who have only seen the cholera as it is in England can form no conception of the features it presented here, where, in addition to the infinitely greater number of its victims, the fear which paralysed so vast a proportion of the community, and the besotted ignorance of the lower orders, added to the horrors of the period. It was, indeed, the pestilence that walketh in darkness—a moral darkness, more appalling than the deepest shades of night; the descriptions of the plagues of the middle ages, with their popular commotions and denunciations of poisoners and witchcraft, being renewed almost to the letter.

From its first appearance, the cry was raised by the disaffected to the Piedmontese sway, that the epidemic was the result of an organised plot, a deliberate course taken by the government to spread a poison among the people, which, by diminishing their numbers, would render them less formidable, less capable of revolt. The propagation of the miasma was said to be effected by poisoned rockets, charged with a mephitic preparation, which were let off from the mountain-forts at night, and dropped their fatal contents into the devoted city! I have been gravely assured of this as a positive fact by natives, whose position as clerks and shopkeepers, implying a certain amount of education and responsibility, ought to have rendered them superior to such absurdities; but the blind hatred to Piedmont, which lurks at the heart of every thorough Genoese, made any attempt to reason with them hopeless. As their only extenuation, it must be stated that rockets were certainly seen at night, at intervals, during the first period of the cholera, sent up, it is supposed, by some of those individuals who love to fish in troubled waters, and calculated, by imposing on public credulity,

to commence an insurrectionary or reactionary movement.

Another view of the question recognised the cholera as a manifest judgment of Heaven upon the liberal institutions, the freedom of the press, and religious toleration, established since the constitution of 1848; while, above all, the parochial clergy took advantage of the moment to ascribe the evils that had come upon Genoa to the spread of the Valdese heresy, converts to which—or, as it is equally termed, the Italian Reformed Church—within the last twelvemonth have become exceedingly numerous.

A third, and still more absurd hypothesis, sought to account for the presence of this terrible visitant by attributing it to the malevolence of the physicians, who, wishing to enrich themselves by creating a great number of patients, spread the infection in the town by sprinkling some deadly liquid, which they always carried in small phials, along the streets, whenever they thought themselves unobserved. At the commencement of the epidemic, a respectable man, feeling unwell when he was out, opened a bottle of camphorated spirits he had in his pocket, as a preventive remedy; unfortunately he was noticed, the cry raised of 'A poisoner, a poisoner!' and, set upon by the crowd, he would have been torn to pieces in their mad fury had he not opportunely found refuge in a neighbouring guard-house. In many instances, the doctors were forced to drink the potions they had ordered for the sick, to satisfy their relations that they contained no deleterious ingredients. The slightest demur awakened suspicions; and once or twice nearly proved fatal, as the ignorant wretches proceeded to actual violence, and cruelly beat the unfortunate physicians, who narrowly escaped out of their hands.



The White Dove

P. ROSS

THE death-bed scene is a commonplace of literature. Writers of all ages have done their best to invest with drama the human act of dying. They have imposed a convention by which the dying man is allowed to have his final say, to make speeches, even to be eloquent. To me as a practising doctor this has always been a matter for wonder, as in real life, or real death, the convention does not hold. Death is not like this. There is no drama, inasmuch as the chief character has lost the power of acting. The moribund do not make fine speeches. Last words are more often fatuous than famous. Life ends pitifully and pitilessly; it does not end with a peroration.

And so with the occult manifestations with which men have immemorially surrounded the phenomenon of death, from the comets and cosmic upheavals which foretold the death of kings to the door knockings and falling of pictures from cottage walls marking the passing of humbler citizens. Are they not mere products of the vanity of the human kind, the conceit of actors who think their parts so important that Nature should acknowledge their exits with thunderbolts, or vary her normal processes at least some jot or tittle? So it has always appeared to me,

but once I was made to think differently, and furiously. Let me tell the story.

I WAS practising in Kenya at the time as a Government medical officer, and my annual leave had fallen due, what we called our 'local leave,' rather disparagingly, in contradistinction to 'home leave,' which came regularly every two to three years in those halcyon days before Hitler and Mau Mau. I had cast off the cares of medical practice, handed over to my relief, and set out by car from Kisumu on Victoria Nyanza on a bright morning before the heat of the day had begun, bound for the high country round Mount Kenya, where I hoped to enjoy the delights of a European climate, to fish for rainbow trout in cold streams during the day and sit by log-fires at night.

I stopped at Londiani about eleven for a break and a cup of tea, after a dusty drive of ninety miles, in which I had climbed from the 3800 feet level of the great lake to 7000 feet, and was already in the settled area of the Kenya Highlands. Sitting on the verandah of the little log-built hotel I inhaled the sharp air with relish. It was grand to be off duty, to sit in idleness with no fear of sudden calls

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to this or that medical emergency. My content on that score was somewhat disturbed by mine hostess of the hotel, a charming lady whom I had met before, and who now approached with a request that, seeing I was there, I would give her dog an injection for tick fever.

The dog was brought, a Great Dane, dragging its legs pathetically, and regarding me with mournful eyes. A syringe of sorts was produced, and some trypan blue. With the help of two Lumbwa houseboys, who showed no enthusiasm, I did the job, spilling only a moderate quantity of the vicious dye on my clothing, was thanked profusely, and departed. I remember indulging in a little self-pity about the lot of a doctor in this world, how everyone treats him as being perpetually on duty, expected to function at any moment, even served up with domestic animals to treat if no human invalid is handy.

I was still musing in this fashion, while bowling along the dusty earth-road from Londiani to Molo, when a car approached, travelling at speed I judged, as we learned to judge in Kenya, from the height of its dust-cloud. It braked to a standstill, and its occupant, emerging from his dust, signalled me to stop. He was a European and I thought a settler from his get-up, terai hat with faded leopard-skin band, khaki shirt and shorts revealing arms and knees more black than brown. He walked up to my car. 'Can you tell me,' he said, 'where I can find a doctor?' He spoke in the manner of one who knows he is putting up a difficult proposition and expects no easy answer, and indeed in other circumstances he would have been right.

It occurred to me that the next nearest medico would have to be sought for at least fifty miles away. I had recovered from my ill-temper at the dog incident, and the humour of the situation struck me so much that I replied quite cheerfully: 'Yes, I am one, trying to-day to avoid recognition as such, but meeting with no success. What is the trouble?'

'I passed a camp back there a few miles and a boy stopped me to tell me his bwana was very ill. "Anataka kufa," he said. I had a look at him, and I should think the boy is right. He doesn't look to me as if he would last long. Lucky I've met you.'

The settler's relief was evident at the early end to his quest. I could see that this young

man was not enjoying his chance contact with the world of medical calamity. Youth and health never do. It was a Saturday morning and quite probably he was on his way to a cricket or polo match at Londiani.

'Right,' I said, 'I'll see him. If he is as ill as you think the obvious thing is to get him to hospital. I'm going Nakuru way, and no doubt can fix it up. Just tell me where to find him.' The settler gave me directions, thanked me, and departed, and I pushed on, musing again on the difficulties of getting away from doctoring.

IT was quite easy to find the spot. The big thorn-tree described to me was an outstanding specimen of the *Acacia lahai*, common in that part of Kenya, and in the yellow grass beneath its flat canopy, a few yards from the road, I saw the camp. It was not, however, what I had expected. I had visualised the green double-skinned tent and safari box-body car of some official or prospector on tour—a common sight to Kenya travellers. What I saw was an antiquated Ford saloon—'sedan' I believe it is called—standing forlornly under the thorn-tree. The long grass concealing its wheels increased its air of abandonment, already suggested by its extreme dilapidation. I thought I had made a mistake, until I got close enough to see a jumble of wooden boxes and empty petrol-cans stacked below and around it, and on the far side of the tree a mean little structure of canvas and sticks, which I took to be 'boy's quarters.'

There was no boy to be seen and no sign^{of} life, but, on approaching closer, through the open rear window of the car I could see there was an occupant. He was stretched out, as far as the width of the car would allow, on the rear seat, covered by an old blanket, his legs doubled up uncomfortably under him, his head angled awkwardly against the window-ledge. His face was towards me, and at a glance it was apparent the settler had not exaggerated his condition. He appeared to be asleep or unconscious, and the thing that struck me first was the deadly pallor of his face, extending to his lips, so that it was hard to see where these began. His hair, more grey than black, hung in wisps over his damp forehead. I would have put his age at fifty, possibly more. I noted that his pallor had an added yellow tinge and made my diagnosis,

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without any self-congratulation, though I remember thinking that Harley Street might not have been so rapid, lacking local knowledge. I opened the car door gently and said: 'Can I help you? I am a doctor.'

His eyelids flickered and opened, revealing blue eyes which gazed at me only half-comprehendingly.

'I am a doctor,' I repeated. 'What is the trouble?'

I saw he understood, and for answer he pointed at the floor of the car to a bully-beef tin with top removed which stood there. Lifting it, I saw that it was filled with a black liquid, and knew my diagnosis was correct. I nodded. 'Let me have a look at you,' I said.

I OPENED up his clothing, such as it was—a sweat-sodden cotton shirt and crumpled khaki trousers. His heart-beat was rapid and feeble. The spleen was easily felt, enlarged to five times its normal size. The yellow pigmentation of his face pervaded the whole body. There was no doubt that this was a case of blackwater fever, that dreaded and often fatal complication of malaria, and a bad case at that. He was pretty far gone. It was clear to me that only the most careful treatment and nursing could pull him through, and even then his chances were small. My examination seemed to rouse him, as he kept his eyes open and followed my movements. I noted that his heart showed signs of old valvular disease, and that he had a large double inguinal hernia.

I sat on the floor of the car with my legs through the open door. There was just enough space left to do so, that not occupied by the patient being filled with a jumble of boxes and bundles conveying little except that the owner was not what is known as a man of substance. I did not question him as to who he was, what was his business, and so on. It was clear that he belonged to the class known in the Colonies as 'poor European,' a small group in the Kenya of those days, and for that reason thrown all the more into distressing relief against the background of their prosperous brethren. It was better to make no inquiries, on the principle of the old adage about asking no questions.

I told him he had blackwater fever, and noted that this was no revelation to him. I went on to explain what should be done, how

essential it was to get him to a hospital, how he would be well looked after there, and how much greater would be his chances of getting well. I stressed the gross discomfort of his present surroundings. I spoke as one simply repeating a ritual, for this sort of speech is a stock piece of every doctor, embellished or intensified according to the degree of opposition he expects. In this case I expected none. To my surprise, however, I could see by his eyes, which were now wide open, that, though he understood my proposition, he had other views. And then with an effort he began to talk, and to some purpose, if to no good sense nor to my liking. I was astonished that he was capable of co-ordinated speech at all. His accents were not those of Eton or Cheltenham—I would not have been surprised if they had been—but to this day I do not know whether they were Northern English, Lowland Scots, or even Irish.

He began by thanking me for bothering about him. Did I see a faint gleam of irony in his sunken eyes when he chided me for wishing to move a blackwater case—a scoring point with the white laity in the tropics? And then, quite lucidly and cogently, he gave me a résumé of the objections to hospitals held by the public in general and active male adults in particular. He had them all—the noise and clatter, the enforced awakening at 5 a.m. for washing, the man in the next bed who coughs all night, the ordering about by nurses, their open-handedness with Epsom salts and stinginess with legitimate refreshment. He was not eloquent. It was difficult for him to speak at all, but he covered the ground. I was annoyed. There never was a case which more urgently required 'hospitalisation,' as the modern jargon has it, and he was refusing, with arguments, too, which struck more than a sympathetic chord in my own heart. He was making things exceedingly difficult. He denied that he was in gross discomfort. He had had many vicissitudes in this life, had travelled in many countries and was used to hard living. He had a good boy to look after him and preferred the shade of the acacia and the fresh air to the wards of a hospital. Could there be a more peaceful or beautiful spot, he appealed to me? He would be all right in a few days.

TALKING seemed now to have exhausted him and he closed his eyes. He looked

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more dreadfully ill than ever. I went to my car, got a thermos flask of tea and gave him some, laced with whisky—poor therapeutics, but perhaps better than none. There was no sign of the boy. Gone off perhaps foraging, I thought, or he might even have left his master in superstitious fear of death. I pondered on the next move, and decided to push on to Nakuru and get help. Perhaps the appearance of an ambulance would convince him.

He woke up again. 'I can't leave you here all alone,' I said.

His speech was now very feeble. 'All right here,' he said, 'all right—peaceful—not alone. By and by have—company—white dove come and talk to me—my little white dove—talk—to—me.' His voice trailed off.

Too late, I thought, as I watched his eyes grow dim, and his breathing more stertorous. Here it comes, the silly rambling end, the babbling of green fields, and the rest of it. Pity. An intelligent man, too, I thought. Would no doubt have been a personality worth knowing. And now—white doves!

There was a curious little scurrying sound outside. Something flashed past me. I saw a white bird alight on the man's chest and make cooing noises. A thin, very white finger emerged from the grimy blanket and stroked the bird's head. A flurry of wings and the apparition had gone. I jumped back from the old Ford car in amazement. Was I dreaming, or the victim of some mad optical illusion? I looked round, but no bird was to be seen. The vertical sun beat down in all its midday strength, making the thorn-tree's branches shine like burnished copper. Everything was still and lifeless.

I got into my car and drove furiously to Nakuru. I told the police there about the case, asking them to get in touch with the medical authorities and arrange for help to be sent, suggesting that if they found the man alive they should get him to hospital without further argument. This done, I pushed on to Nyeri.

Most medical men acquire the faculty of being able temporarily to banish patients from their minds, however unusual or harrowing their cases, when they are not actively concerned in treating them. I found, however, that this patient would not be banished. The pursuit of rainbow trout in the Chania river did not receive the concentration it deserved. A white face and a white dove obtruded themselves continually on my thoughts.

FOURTEEN days later, my holiday finished,

I set out again for Kisumu. I stopped at Nakuru, hoping to get news, but was unsuccessful. The medical officer at the hospital was not available, and the sister on duty could only tell me that the case had not come to the hospital. The police superintendent was on safari and the Sikh inspector could tell me nothing. Being in a hurry, as rain was threatening, and Kenya roads in those days could easily turn a simple if rough motor journey into an uncertain adventure, I pushed on to Kisumu. It was dark when I passed the site of my patient's camp, and quite impossible to locate the spot.

Next morning I dropped in at the local police station, with the object of asking the superintendent to find out for me what had happened. A young European police constable was on duty, whose face I had not seen before, to whom I told my business. 'Oh,' he said, 'I know all about that! I've just come from Nakuru two days ago—been posted here. Yes, the superintendent sent me out with the ambulance. Bit of a party it was, too.'

'Did you find him alive?' I interrupted.

'Oh yes, he was alive all right,' continued the constable, 'but only just. Alive enough, though, to have his own dirty way about going to hospital. He just flatly refused—said he was perfectly well off where he was. He had a boy with him, a Buganda, who seemed to be looking after him very well. We found he had been to Marsh's shamba a few miles away, and come back with milk and eggs and other medical comforts. I was detailed to visit the camp every day. The doctor at Nakuru came out himself and gave him treatment. Four days after you saw him he was sitting up and taking notice properly, and three days ago he moved off, for Nairobi, he said.'

'Did you find out who he was and what he did?' I asked. 'Was he a labour recruiter, a miner, or what?'

'Oh, nothing so common as that,' continued the cheerful young officer. 'He was an actor, an acrobat, a weight-lifter, an illusionist! We checked up on him all right. Called himself "The Great Pardo." I've got some of his handbills somewhere—will send you one. We found he had come here from China by way of Ceylon—British passport—was recently in Kampala. It seems he has been all over Africa giving shows, in the Indian bazaars and native quarters, competing with the

fakirs, snake-charmers, and other local talent. Must say he is the first white man I've heard of at that game. Poor devil! I suppose, though, he must have made a living at it.'

Poor devil indeed! I recalled that white face showing not only the ravages of sickness but of age. I remembered the straining defective heart, and the double rupture. Weight-lifter! What strange concatenation of circumstances had brought this Britisher, who had probably first seen the light of day in some English town or village, to making a living by exhibiting his virtuosity to betel-chewing Indians and grinning Africans? What ill-starred Odyssey, what sordid safari,

had led him to fight his battle for life under the thorn-tree? And what guts! If Barrie's dictum that 'courage is the only virtue' be true, then Pardo was indeed among the elect of heaven.

The policeman duly sent me the handbill. It was poorly printed on execrable paper, probably by some bazaar press. Pardo's face was not recognisable. He was clad in tights. He was holding aloft an enormous bar-bell. In another reproduction he was on the parallel-bars. There were two insets below, one of a fan of playing cards, and another of a bird, of unrecognisable variety, except that it was white. The legend ran: 'Pardo, and his Performing Pigeon!'

The Saving of the Bison

FRANK ILLINGWORTH

THE North American bison, reduced to the verge of extinction by the early settlers, has been brought up in numbers to the point where the herds have had to be thinned out. The herds now total nearly 16,000 animals. That the bison has been saved from extinction is a credit to the Canadians.

There is an immense thrill in walking among a herd of several hundred great beasts of a species which once thundered through boys' magazines to the war-whoops of Indians and such as Buffalo Bill, who must have slaughtered many, many bison to have earned such a nickname, the North American bison being known across the Atlantic as the 'northern buffalo'. Equally is there a thrill in flying low over the big herds that roam the rock and bush wilderness of Canada's Northwest Territories, where the animals are now more than 12,000 strong. This is as I first saw the bison—stampeding across a rocky valley, their massive heads held low, their ragged manes wild in the wind of their own thundering

charge. In part, at any rate, this thrill results from the knowledge that, in so far at least as the buffalo is concerned, man is repairing the thoughtless slaughter of the past, and certainly the preservation of the bison is a classic example of wild-life conservation.

IN its natural state the buffalo once roamed in vast herds over the prairies of North America and through the more open parts of its forested regions. It was the foundation of life of the Indians. They used its heavy pelt in their apparel and for tenting, and its meat for food, both fresh and in the form of pemmican. The relationship was a balanced one. The simple weapons and the primitive economy of the Indians made demands on the herds no greater than the annual increase could supply: in fact, these demands could have been infinitely greater without even remotely threatening the extermination of the bison, for its numbers are said to have reached

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millions, as indeed they must have when one considers the records of individual herds exceeding as much as 25 miles in width and 50 in depth.

Then the white man arrived in North America, to embark upon a slaughter unprecedented in the annals of natural history. He saw in the sale of buffalo-hides a fat livelihood, and to increase his income he enlisted the Indians, replacing their primitive weapons with rifles so that they could increase the rate of slaughter. Individual hunters are credited with killing from 1000 to 3000 buffalo in a season. And not only hunters took a hand in the killing. Prairie farmers, wishing to protect their newly-acquired acres, joined in the slaughter; and the animals provided many a moment of light entertainment for the passengers on the new railways, which were flanked by rotting carcasses. The result was that by the turn of the century there was probably not one buffalo left to roam the prairies of the United States and Canada in a wild state.

Fortunately, the sizable herds of wood buffalo in the far distant and then still unexplored Northwest Territories, in the vicinity of Great Slave Lake, were still intact, and there were a few animals in the upper Peace River valley. In addition, there were a few small groups of plains bison in captivity, the largest of which had been built up by two Montana rangers by the name of Allard and Pablo.

It is a reflection on human nature that the latter herd should have been preserved, not because the bison was near extinction, but because there was a possible profit in increasing the numbers of an animal which had reached the point of extinction. However, it was largely due to the foresight of Allard and Pablo that the North American bison has become as numerous as it is to-day.

The origin of the Allard-Pablo herd dates back to 1873, when an Indian, Walking Coyote, captured four calves near Milk River, not far from the international boundary between the United States and Canada. They were taken to the Flat Head Indian Reservation in Montana to become pets around the St Ignatius Mission, and by 1884 they had increased to thirteen—an unlucky number, to be sure, but in this case, as it proved, of good omen.

It was in this year, 1884, that Pablo suggested to Allard that they buy 10 animals

from the Flat Head Reservation. 'We have the land,' he said. 'We can fence 'em, and in ten or twenty years they'll be worth plenty.' Nine years later, confirmed in their original view that they were on a good thing financially, they purchased 26 animals from a herd built up by a character in his way as fabulous as Buffalo Bill, namely Buffalo Jones. Jones's herd originated from animals roped on the plains of Texas and collected in the Stony Mountain area of Montana by Colonel Bedson.

By 1896 the Allard-Pablo herd numbered more than 300 head, and on Allard's death that year 150 animals were divided among his heirs. They became the nucleus of the majority of buffalo herds in the United States to-day. The second 150 animals remained on the Pablo ranch and provided stock for the re-establishment of the bison in Canada.

AT one time it appeared that changing circumstances would bring about the dispersion and destruction of the Pablo herd. Indeed, the spread of agriculture would undoubtedly have had this end but for the purchase of the greater part of the herd by the Canadian Government in 1905. Many of the Pablo bison came originally from Canada—heavily-built animals with the bulls standing up to six feet at the shoulder, compactly made with immensely heavy heads, low-hanging and shaggy, short horns framed in a matted mane hanging down over the chest and shoulders, slender in withers, ponderous in stance and at the same time possessed of the poise and balance of a ballet-dancer.

In due course the Pablo animals were transported to Alberta by rail. Fences had been erected at Mundare, the unloading-point, so that they could be driven to the reserve prepared for them some 20 miles to the south in wild, little-settled country, here and there littered with the bleached bones and skulls of bison dating from the days of the great slaughter. Further animals were collected from other parts of the country, and by 1914 a quite large herd had been established in Elk Island National Park, an area of some 75 square miles, near Lamont, Alberta. Here, roaming in the wild state among knee-high buffalo-grass, the herds quickly multiplied.

Up to then the herds of Northern Canada had fairly well held their own against encroaching civilisation. It was true they had been hunted mercilessly by the traders and

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trappers who struck northwards up the Peace and Athabasca Rivers into the wild, incredibly beautiful, and yet viciously rugged Northlands. The meat of the buffalo was the staple diet of the robust porteurs who carried the loads of the Hudson's Bay Company further and yet further northwards. The slaughter, however, in no way compared with that of the south, or, at any rate, this could be said of a sub-species of the bison, the wood buffalo of Northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories, and it was here, in 1926, that the Canadian Government established the largest of the buffalo preserves.

Distances in Canada are counted not in tens of miles but in hundreds and thousands. With the Northwest Territories alone being a third the area of Europe, it was possible to lay aside as a buffalo preserve an area exceeding that of Belgium—17,000 square miles!

There were already several considerable herds of wood buffalo in this corner of Canada and it was decided to augment them with plains buffalo from reserves to the south. A bold decision, it involved shipping hundreds of animals by barge up the tortuous rivers that flow and roar northwards into Great Slave Lake; it also resulted in the plains buffalo and the wood variety crossing to produce a new sub-species, which has increased to the point where it has proved necessary to thin the herds. Indeed, by 1950, from estimates arrived at from aerial surveys of the Wood Buffalo Park in that and the previous year, the strength of the herds was put at between 10,000 and 12,000 head.

MEANWHILE the herds that roamed the Elk Island National Park had increased very considerably. By 1948 they numbered 1025 animals; by 1951 the figure stood at 1625. Such a rate of increase made heavy inroads on available feed and, as with the great herds of the Wood Buffalo Park, it was decided to thin out the older animals.

One could perhaps be forgiven if one pictured Indian hunters thundering, as in olden days, on horseback right up to and into a stampeding herd and, with war-whoops, driving arrows right through the great beasts' bodies, or, as sometimes they did, leaving the backs of their mounts to leap from the back of one charging buffalo to the next, delivering fatal spear-thrusts with each leap; or if one pictured Colonel Bill Cody and his men riding

among thundering herds, their rifles crackling to provide meat for the workers on the Kansas Pacific Railway. But this is very far from what happened.

The 600 animals slaughtered in Elk Island National Park in December 1951 were rounded up and led along lines of sheaved oats leading to slaughter-pens, where a white-overalled park warden discharged a Winchester against one of the two vulnerable sixpenny-sized spots near the eyes, whereupon two men trundled the carcasses on a horse-drawn sledge to a new £20,000 abattoir 250 yards away!

The round-up, in January 1952, in the Wood Buffalo National Park was almost as prosaic. The park warden and six Indians set off to shoot 400 animals in a few days in the south-east corner of the reserve, where the herds spend the winter grazing. They journeyed not on horseback, but aboard a sledge-train, a line of sledges hauled by a caterpillar tractor, and one of the most uncomfortable methods of travel imaginable, for the sledges rock and roll and buck in the most violent manner. To give the slaughter a truly modern touch, the thinning was witnessed by a government veterinary official, and the carcasses were handled by a local abattoir and deep-freezing plant!

THE full circle has indeed been turned. An animal that was once the foundation of life over a vast area of North America is again contributing to the maintenance of Indian and white. For the meat from the slaughtered animals is distributed among local communities; the bone and horn is made into trinkets and implements by the Indians; the hides pass to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for its patrols operating in the Northlands, buffalo-hide being famous for its cold-resisting qualities, and, although cumbersome in appearance, weighing on an average only 11 pounds.

In addition to the two major herds mentioned, there are small herds in Banff Park in Alberta, Prince Albert Park in Saskatchewan, and Manitoba's Riding Mountain Park; and the time is probably not far distant when it will be possible to start additional buffalo parks in the Northlands, until the bison, which once roamed North America in millions, will have been re-established on a big scale, to remain as a monument to the good sense of the 20th century.



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Camera Version

MERVIN HAVARD

GREAT-AUNT PHILIPPA, did not approve of taxis stopping in front of her house, so, as it was essential to make this visit unusually pleasant for her, I alighted at the Embassy cinema and walked the remaining few blocks to Queen's Square.

To-day, you see, was Aunt Philippa's birthday, the anniversary of the day on which she was born, ninety years ago.

Being her only living relative, I was bound by duty, and a considerable amount of genuine affection despite her uncertain temper, to attend her birthday. My visits were rare. The modiste establishment in London kept me busy, and the journey down to the West Country was long and tedious. Besides, I nearly always finish with a blood row with my aunt.

Every time I came down to Bristol I promised myself not to argue with Aunt Philippa, to let the insults run like water off a duck's back, to be nice, and sweet, and kind—but it seldom worked out like that.

Aunt Philippa said the most awful things, and it was hard not to retaliate just a little bit. However, this time it was definitely going to be different. 'I promise,' I told myself aloud. But even that didn't convince me.

At this fabulous age Aunt Philippa had a boundless energy. She read prolifically, with,

of course, the aid of her pince-nez, and her hearing was quite unimpaired. She was, in fact, a very determined old lady, more than a martinet, exceedingly vixen, but with a delicious if rather childish sense of humour.

I STOPPED outside the tall sombre Georgian house and looked up to the first-floor drawing-room windows to see if Aunt Philippa was peeping through the lace curtains. I rather hoped that she would be, for it would undoubtedly please the old lady to see that there was no taxi ticking away on the kerbside. However, no ancient face appeared.

I braced myself and then tugged at the bell; it tinkled faintly in the depths of domestic regions. After an outburst of frenzied yapping from elderly Elliot, my aunt's horrible little peke, the door was opened by glum-faced Mrs Roach, the maid of all work, who had grown sour in the process of looking after Aunt Philippa over the years. Her face now portrayed misery in extreme, her voice whined, and her actions were so slow as to warrant Aunt Philippa referring to her as 'The Slug.' 'Afternoon, Miss Evelyn,' she moaned.

'Good afternoon, Mrs Roach. How are you?'

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'All right.'

'And how's Mrs Lambert been behaving herself?'

Mrs Roach sniffed distastefully. 'Same as usual. The way she carries on you'd think she were a two-year-old.' She closed the door. 'She's up in the drawing-room,' she indicated with a slow upward roll of her head.

I was fully accustomed to Mrs Roach's almost uncivil method of receiving visitors to the house, so without comment I handed over my coat and mounted the stairs.

The house, as usual, smelled musty and lavender, which was not to be wondered at seeing it was cluttered up with a life collection of Edwardian and Victorian *objets d'art*, stuffed birds, and innumerable knick-knacks, not to mention Elliot.

AUNT PHILIPPA was balanced on a velvet-covered sofa, in front of a blazing fire, with her feet placed sedately on a footstool. The windows were shut, and the atmosphere in the room was, to say the least, oppressive.

'So you have arrived,' said Aunt Philippa, sternly, as I entered the room. 'You're late!'

'Yes, I walked from the Embassy.' I kissed the old lady. 'Happy birthday, darling, and many happy returns.' As soon as the words had been uttered, I knew that I had been tactlessly foolish, but the expected reproach was not forthcoming.

'Come over here, let me look at you,' commanded Aunt Philippa.

I obeyed reluctantly. I knew the procedure too well; it never changed.

Aunt Philippa's critical eye studied me carefully. 'Yes,' she said, looking over the top of her pince-nez. 'You have put on a little more weight, I am pleased to see, but that muck you plaster all over your face doesn't help your looks, if that is what you imagine. But you always were a plain gal, Evelyn. Still, that's not your fault—that's what comes of your mother marrying that pug-nosed bank clerk, or whatever he was.'

I was about to contest this statement hotly, but I remembered my promise in time and sank in the cosy chair by the fire. Elliot minced into the room with a supercilious look on his face. He took one sniff at my nyloned legs, and climbed on to the sofa, where he sat surveying me warily.

The heat was almost unbearable. I took a

chance. 'Darling, it's awfully hot in here. Shall I open a window?'

'Certainly not,' snapped Aunt Philippa. 'Do you want Elliot and me to catch a chill? If you're too warm by the fire you can sit on another chair.'

'Thank you,' I said gratefully, and was about to move, when Aunt said petulantly: 'Haven't you brought me a present?'

'Oh, I almost forgot it,' I murmured, and produced from my handbag a small box wrapped in green Cellophane. I handed it to the old lady. 'I hope you like it. It's not much, I'm afraid.'

Aunt Philippa took the box and shook it. 'Isn't this thrilling?' she said childishly.

A life-saver, I thought, as I watched Aunt excitedly tear off the wrappings.

The present was a cameo brooch, and Aunt Philippa was delighted with it. 'Evelyn, dear, it's lovely—it's very pretty—you ought not to have bought me such an expensive present.'

I laughed. 'My sweet, but this *is* a special occasion.'

'Yes, it is,' agreed Aunt Philippa complacently, pinning the new brooch on to her shawl.

'WHO'S been to see you to-day?' I asked brightly.

Aunt Philippa's teeth clicked. 'H'm,' she said. 'The Vicar called.'

'How nice,' I suggested.

'What, that old woman! He's a fool. Said the parish were very proud of me. Impossible. I've never been to church in my life.' Aunt Philippa tapped her Malacca cane on the carpet irritably.

'He meant well,' I said, defending the poor vicar rather weakly.

Aunt Philippa turned towards me, ready for battle.

I saw the red light. I knew Aunt was spoiling for an argument, so I trod very carefully.

'And to complete my day,' went on Aunt Philippa, 'that dreadful Penelope Tenner is coming to tea.'

'Didn't you ask her?' I asked, cautiously.

'Of course I asked her,' exploded Aunt Philippa. 'Had to. A man from the press is coming to take my photograph. He wants to take a picture of us together. Of course, she's much younger than I am, but the newspaperman wants two elderly ladies together, so that

CAMERA VERSION

his rag can put a stupid caption underneath like "Darby and Joan"—except that we're both Joans.'

'Oh, I see,' I murmured. 'How old did you say Miss Tenner was?'

Aunt Philippa shot a wary look at me. 'I didn't say.'

'Well, how old is she?'

'She's eighty-nine,' said Aunt Philippa casually, without so much as a trace of compunction, or the sign of a blush to cover up her enormous white lie.

I was getting a little exasperated. 'Auntie, how can you say that she is *much* younger than you are?'

'Well, she *is* younger than me, isn't she?' said Aunt Philippa peevishly.

I sighed. 'Yes, I know, darling, but only just. You talk as if she were about sixty.'

Aunt Philippa snorted. 'She may be only one year my junior, but wait till you see her—she looks fifty years older! She's as blind as a bat, and has to wear one of those hearing-aid things, and, if you please, she still wears mourning for her sister who died thirty-odd years ago. She only does it to get sympathy.'

'That's rather unkind,' I said, deeply shocked by my aunt's vicious outburst.

'Unkind—my foot!' snorted Aunt Philippa contemptuously. 'She's unkind, if anybody is. For twenty years and more she's been praying that I would drop dead. I know it. She seethes with jealousy because I am a year older than she is, and so get all the respect.'

Aunt Philippa was becoming more and more excited. I remembered the blood-pressure. 'Auntie, do calm down,' I pleaded. 'All this ranting isn't good for you.'

Aunt Philippa was not to be placated. 'And I've heard her,' she stormed on obstinately, 'I've heard her tell people in that genteel voice of hers: "I don't think poor dear Mrs Lambert looks at all well. I shouldn't think she's got many more years—poor dear—she's so sickly." Sickly, indeed!' bellowed Aunt Philippa, resuming her normal voice—she had been trying to mimic Miss Tenner. 'But you watch—you watch her stupid face this afternoon when she wishes me a happy birthday. That'll be a sight. Silly old gowk.'

'Auntie!'

'Well, she is!'

'You're a wicked old lady.'

'I'm what!' shouted Aunt Philippa, looking like a dragon.

I remembered my vow. 'Sorry, darling,'

I apologised. 'I shouldn't have said that.'

Much to my relief the door opened just then, and Mrs Roach solemnly announced Miss Tenner.

AUNT PHILIPPA, with a false toothy smile and considerable surface charm, said how delighted she was to see Miss Tenner, and promptly put her to sit in the armchair near the fire. Then she went on to congratulate the old lady on her splendid and brave venture into the fresh air, when she was in such a fragile state of health.

I held my breath. I had to admit that Miss Tenner did look older than Aunt Philippa, but her faculties were nothing like so impaired as Aunt had led me to believe. In fact, the two looked very much alike, and not only physically. Before long I detected in Miss Tenner's voice the same feline quality that was to be found in my aunt's.

Both women were thoroughly irritable and on edge. When the photographer arrived twenty minutes later I was hard put to it to know how to cope with things.

The photographer was a dapper little man, full of life and very keen on his job. He put his camera on the table and addressed Miss Tenner. 'Well, miss,' he said jovially, rubbing his hands together, 'where would you like to sit?'

'The sofa,' said Aunt Philippa loftily, before the other old lady had time to open her mouth.

'Of course,' said the photographer amiably. 'Anywhere you like, miss. Makes no difference to me.'

Miss Tenner struggled forward on to her stick and laboriously raised herself from the chair. She gave a pathetic, chesty cough, which I guessed was designed to strike a little pity into Aunt Philippa's heart. However, it did not have the desired effect. Aunt Philippa sat bolt upright, with an icy smirk on her face, and watched Miss Tenner puff and blow her way across to the sofa. 'Some people,' said Miss Tenner breathlessly as she flopped into the cushions, 'have no sympathy for old age.'

Aunt Philippa stared arrogantly into the fire. 'Some people,' she replied, 'have too much.'

There was an awkward silence. I pressed my fingernails into the palms of my hand, and closed my eyes: 'Please God, don't let them make a scene.'

The photographer stepped in. 'That'll be

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all right, ladies, but would you move a little closer together, it would make a much nicer picture.'

Both old ladies looked daggers at him. 'Can't you take us like this?' snapped Aunt Philippa.

'Well, I could,' replied the man rubbing his chin thoughtfully. 'But there's too much sofa in between you.' He glanced at me, hoping that I might be able to help matters, but, catching Aunt Philippa's stony eye, I backed away.

'I want it to be a nice homely picture,' the photographer said.

'What about the dog?' asked Aunt Philippa coldly.

'The dog?' inquired the photographer.

'Yes, Elliot. Couldn't he sit between us?'

The poor bewildered man contemplated the mangy peke, who was in the act of doing his duty on the *petit point* footstool. He sighed hopelessly. 'All right.'

Elliot was commanded by Aunt Philippa on to the sofa, where he sat with an expression of profound disdain upon his moth-eaten face.

Miss Tenner gave Aunt Philippa a killing look, and at the same time eased herself away from Elliot as though he were a pariah, ending up bent over the arm of the sofa like an indignant Petrouchka.

How on earth, I wondered, could the photographer shoot these two old crows if they behaved like this?

He was very patient. 'I want you to look happy,' he smiled hopefully. 'Full of warmth and friendship. I want your photograph to remind young people that with old age comes dignity, understanding, and, above all, peacefulness. It's got to be a happy picture, ladies.'

I suppressed a giggle. It was too ludicrous. This little man painting a word-picture of how they ought to look, while the subjects behaved like two lifelong enemies . . .

At last, they were sitting up straight. He took two pictures.

I sighed, not only with relief that the man had done his job, but also with an awful presentiment of what the picture could turn out like. There was Aunt Philippa sitting bolt upright, a frigid Victorian, with an angry scowl creasing her face into something evil and malicious. Miss Tenner crouching like a witch, her skinny grey hands clasping the stick with such determination that she looked as if she would set about Aunt Philippa at any minute. Elliot, with his knotted fur and jaundiced eyes, completed the appalling picture.

I let the photographer out of the house to give the two old ladies a chance to fight it out alone. 'Marvellous old ladies,' he beamed, as I opened the front-door. 'They're wonderful, aren't they? So charming and quaint.'

'Marvellous,' I agreed, wondering if I had heard aright.

On the 5.15 back to London I took stock of myself. Could it possibly be that the photographer was right? Was I jaundiced, or was he an incurable sentimentalist. I laughed and lit a cigarette. The photographs would prove it.

THE next morning I picked up the *Daily Pictorial* in the hall of my flat and turned automatically to the back-page. There was the photograph of two of the dearest old ladies you could wish to see. They were seated on a sofa, with soft beams of sunshine falling across their silver hair. One old lady, wearing a cameo brooch, had a gentle smile upon her lips, and was smoothing the head of an adorable Pekinese, which was looking up at her with adoring eyes. The other elderly lady, holding a walking-stick timidly between her fingers, surveyed them with approval and infinite understanding.

What's in a Name?

*They've named each turning in our village now,
Though no one lost his way in it, somehow:
Commercial Road roars out from Bramble Side,
And Smugglers' Corner gleams out far and wide;
Even Our Lane is labelled—and High Hill
In brave nomenclature seems higher still.*

OLIVE SCHOLES.

Science at Your Service

DEFEATING DECAY IN H.M.S. VICTORY

ONE of the most interesting subjects discussed in the latest annual report from the Forest Products Research Board concerns H.M.S. *Victory*. There seems little doubt that the continued preservation of this famous ship will depend largely upon the contributions of modern science. Two processes of steady decay threaten H.M.S. *Victory*, fungal decay and the attacks of the death-watch beetle. However, inspection has shown that the ship's old oak timbers are withstanding fungal decay better than some of the modern softwood beams which have been recently installed in repair work. Nevertheless, many of the old timbers are dangerously high in moisture content and further fungal decay could easily and actively take place. Improvements in ventilation below deck have not led to a sufficient fall in the timbers' moisture content, and it is now suggested that the practice of hosing down the decks contributes to this dampness. For over twenty years the depredations of the death-watch beetle have been regularly watched by scientists and it would seem that the population of this wood-boring pest on H.M.S. *Victory* has reached an alarming level. Fumigation has now been recommended, though it will be a difficult practical operation, much more difficult than for a modern vessel. The fumigant suggested is methyl bromide, better known perhaps as a fumigant for controlling pest infestation in stores of grain. This attempt to eradicate the death-watch beetle is unlikely to be completely successful, but it would appear that it may be expected to reduce considerably the present population now steadily boring away in the timbers of Nelson's historic ship.

GARDENING FOOTWEAR

In wetish weather the choice for most gardeners is between gumboots and old boots or shoes; the former give full protection against water, but are cumbersome to wear, and the latter, though usually more comfortable, give poor protection. A solution to this dilemma has been provided by a firm of

nurserymen who have specialised in garden needs for many years. They have introduced an all-rubber garden shoe. The ancestry of design is obviously the clog, but the new shoes are well shaped and considerably superior to most people's idea of clogs. Lining socks should be worn with them, and these are provided as accessories. The rubber used is soft and pliable and the shoes can be easily slipped on and off. Sizes from 3 to 12 are available in black or brown. The shoes are fully waterproof and will serve all purposes usually met with gumboots, except that of leg protection. They are slightly broader than normal shoes, but this is compensated for by the lining socks; the only fitting doubt that might arise is with people with particularly narrow feet, who may find the grip at the heel insufficiently close. The price is very reasonable for footwear likely to give years of service.

AN ELECTRIC AND SOLID-FUEL FIRE

One of the continuous-burning solid-fuel fires has been ingeniously provided by its manufacturers with an electric-fire that fits into the space above the fire-front. The electric-fire is an accessory that need not be purchased with the solid-fuel fire; it is a single-bar, 1-kilowatt fire, with reflector and guard. It can be used in other positions, as it is designed so that the clips attaching it to the grate-front also serve as feet for firm standing in separate use. This development seems a sensible one, for the greater forward projection of the continuous-burning fire reduces the hearth-space for standing an electric-fire and this creates awkward problems for smaller modern fireplaces. In the autumn and spring, when only an electric-fire may be needed, the ability to place such a fire well back from the hearth-front is certainly advantageous. Though this is not claimed by the makers, it seems likely that this new electric-fire will fit a number of other models of continuous-burning fires—at any rate, this possibility certainly seems well worth investigation.

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A SCIENTIFIC 'NOSE'

The replacement of the nose as an odour detector is an old and hitherto unsolved problem of science. The assessment of food quality in so far as odour is a factor of taste or a measure of freshness has remained a matter of expert 'smelling,' and this inevitably introduces all the variables summed up in the phrase 'the human factor.' American research at the University of California found that the nose was too insensitive an instrument to detect the earliest stages of fish spoilage. As a result, what is probably the first laboratory device to replace the nose has been developed. It has been given the somewhat inelegant name of stinkometer. It was found that if clean air is passed first through the food sample and then into a vessel containing potassium permanganate solution, the characteristic magenta colour of the solution is changed according to the extent of spoilage. Slight spoilage is indicated by the development of a blue colour; increasing extents of spoilage are shown by grey blue, green blue, and finally pale or dark green. The method has not been found to be applicable only to fish; it was also effective in measuring coffee aroma. A good deal of further research will obviously be required to establish the range of odours that can be reliably assessed by this chemical method. It cannot decide whether an odour is good or bad, but it can, for any odour which causes the colour changes, measure the amount of odour-creating material present and express this as a comparative number. Not only has it detected trace-like odours that the nose cannot perceive with reliability, but it can also put a quantitative value on stronger odours. The further development of this device may be of great importance to many branches of the food industry.

A LOCKING-CUPBOARD CATCH

A catch-lock for cupboards that may be locked when necessary has been put on the market. The catch itself has a press-plunger operation for easy closing and opening. The catch carries a lever handle which contains the keyhole. The lock has a disc tumbler mechanism with fifty variations; two nickel-plated keys are provided with each locking catch. The catch and handle are made of cast zinc, and two finishes are available—chromium-plated or bronze-surfaced. Each catch-lock is carton-packed separately with the necessary screws for attaching.

ELECTRIC THERMOMETERS

Industrial thermometers based upon electro-thermal effects are not new, of course, but U.S. Army medical research has now developed an electric clinical thermometer which may replace the familiar mercury column type, which has dominated medicine for well over a century. The electric reading of temperature depends upon a thermistor, a small thermally-sensitive resistance unit. This is attached to a probe less than five inches long. The probe can be used for taking temperatures orally or by any other method now adopted with mercury column clinical thermometers. The probe is easily detachable for sterilisation. The thermistor is connected to a battery-fed circuit and the battery case also holds a recording meter, which directly shows the temperature. One important advance is that this new type of thermometer can give an accurate reading within five to seven seconds. The battery and meter unit is small and can easily be held in the palm of the hand.

The thermometer is already being produced in the United States and large-scale trial use is planned to begin well before the end of 1954. If the results obtained are successful, the thermometer may become the standard for all medical services in U.S. forces. It is easy to predict that such a development would be swiftly followed by the introduction of similar thermometers in general medical and hospital practice.

PIPE INSULATION

A new building-cum-engineering product is aluminium sheathing for insulated piping lines. This is made from commercially pure aluminium, is semi-hardened, and corrugated to increase strength. When insulating material is applied to the outside of hot-water pipes, the sheathing can be placed over the material while soft. It is in 3-feet-long or 2-feet-long sections, each section being semicircular; various diameter-sizes are made. Securing after placing in position can be carried out with aluminium banding or stainless-steel self-tapping screws. It is claimed that the reflective surface and low heat emission capacity of the material adds to insulating efficiency, though the main function of the metallic sheathing is to enclose and protect the insulating material. Corrosion resistance is very high and pipe insulation can be made virtually permanent if this covering idea is adopted.

SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

A NEW BUILDING-MATERIAL

Originally developed for making prefabricated buildings overseas, particularly in the tropics, a special form of aluminium sheeting is now and for the first time available in this country. It is deeply corrugated. For small roofs and buildings no framing supports are needed and the sheet can be used unsupported from below for spans up to 10 feet in width. A section of sheet 12 feet by 2½ feet weighs only 18 pounds. Sheets can be prepunched, so that drilling on the construction site can be largely eliminated. However, the material can be cut with a tenon-saw when required. It has a very bright surface initially, but this weathers to a light grey in about a year; painting is unnecessary. The sheet is sold in two standard widths, 30 and 15 inches, and in 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 feet lengths. For reroofing old buildings, e.g. on farms, or roofing new domestic outbuildings, this new material seems likely to be in considerable demand both for efficiency and economy.

MECHANISED DIGGING

At about the same cost as that of a motor-driven lawn-mower, a fully-mechanised digging-machine is now available for the gardener. There have been semi-mechanised appliances for hoeing, and there are several power-diggers for the small-holding, but the introduction of complete mechanisation for the labour of soil turning and cleaning on a scale that suits small areas of land is relatively new. The machine, with necessary simplifications, follows the pattern of its well-known commercial models. The earth is turned over by rotary hoe blades; a 10-inch-wide strip can be cultivated, but the fitting of extra blades increases this, if required, to 15 inches. The power unit is a petrol-engine, developing 1½ b.h.p. at 2500 revolutions per minute; it is a 4-stroke, single-cylinder engine, fan-cooled. Power transmission is by vee-belt drive to the wormshaft and gear driving wheels, but by worm-gear drive to the blade-rotor. The three simple controls consist of the clutch, the wheel-lock that puts both wheels or one wheel in or out of gear, and an adjustable depth-

control skid. Side shields may be fitted when inter-row hoeing or digging is being done; these shields protect the adjacent crops from being scattered with soil. The appliance is robustly constructed and can be handled without appreciable expenditure of physical effort. It attracted the attention of many private gardeners and garden-owners when first introduced at one of the principal flower-shows of the year, for its labour-saving potentialities offer such an obviously good return on the capital outlay involved.

BETTER BRAKES

The most important part of a car from the safety factor is the brakes, and in view of the appalling road-accident rate that seems to have become a steady feature of the British way of life any device likely to improve brake efficiency deserves the closest investigation by motorists. A British firm has recently introduced a pocket-sized instrument that enables a motorist to check the efficiency of his brakes for himself and under actual road conditions. The indicator is fixed on a small bracket that can be screwed permanently into a convenient position near the driver. When the car or coach or lorry is being driven at a greater speed than 15 m.p.h. and the brakes are applied for an emergency stop, three steel balls move under their own impetus along three grooves of progressively steeper gradients. It is claimed that these movements record exactly the efficiency of the brakes.

The indicator can be re-set and re-used indefinitely. It thus enables a driver to keep a constant check upon brake efficiency and become quickly aware of any deterioration. It also warns a driver whether a standard of efficiency adequate for dry road conditions is, in fact, seriously inadequate for wet conditions. The initial cost of the indicator is remarkably low—not more than the cost of two brake tests at a garage. Even regarded as a rough guide to brake efficiency—though the makers claim it to give a highly-accurate estimation—it would seem to be a very cheap insurance against one of the most common causes of serious road accidents.

TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

Easy-to-Grow Orchids

THERE are a very large number of amateurs to-day who have become orchid-minded, especially now that it has been discovered that there are varieties and types of orchids which are not difficult to grow. A cool house, for instance, is quite suitable for Cymbidiums, Odontoglossums, some kinds of Coelogyne, Cypripediums, and Dendrobiums. Those who are thinking of going in for orchids should consult a good orchid nursery, making known the type of greenhouse they have, so that they can get plants which will not be difficult to look after.

When orchids are grown alongside other plants it is important to see that they have plenty of light, so do not let them be overshadowed by other foliage. I get over the difficulty by setting the pots on other inverted flower-pots; then, too, syringing can be done more easily. Though the orchids enjoy fresh air, they hate draughts. Many of them also dislike too much sunshine in the summer, and so the panes of glass where they are growing may be sprayed over with a little lime-water early in May so as to break up the sun's rays. It helps if rain-water can be used instead of tap-water, and the rule is to be liberal with water when the plants are growing actively, but at other times not to apply any at all.

Sphagnum moss should be used on the surface of the pots, and the moss should always be kept moist, to encourage it to remain green. It is a good plan to give light sprayings early in the day all over the plants, so that the surplus moisture has had time to disappear before the evening. Do the potting-up as the root action starts—that is to say, before the roots actually appear. Lots of crocks are needed at the base of each pot to supply drainage, but these must be sterilised with boiling water, as must the pots themselves. Annual potting is not necessary so long as the pots are large enough and the compost is good.

Cypripediums are usually potted up in the later winter and Odontoglossums in September or March. Cattleyas have two periods of active root-growth—one early in the season and one later. The Dendrobiums do best in

small pots. The Cattleyas must be potted firmly and the Odontoglossums lightly. The ingredients for the potting-compost should be—osmunda fibre, good loam, peat fibre, very coarse silver sand, crushed crocks, and sphagnum moss. Cypripediums like a solid compost, but Dendrobiums do best in an open mixture consisting almost entirely of osmunda fibre and sphagnum moss. Anyway, discuss these composts with the nurseryman.

Now for a list of the orchids which should do well in any ordinary greenhouse. I should start with *Coelogyne cristata*, which grows from 6 to 10 inches high and bears masses of white and yellow flower from February to April. Then I should select four Dendrobiums. The first, *Dendrobium chrysanthum*, which grows from 4 to 6 feet high and bears yellow and purple flowers in the winter. The second, *Dendrobium nobile*, which grows 2 feet high and bears white, rosy-purple, and crimson flowers in the winter months. The third, *Dendrobium chrysotoxum*, which is a 1-footer, with orange and yellow flowers produced in March. And lastly, *Dendrobium superbiens*, which grows 4 feet high and bears magenta, pink, and purple flowers in the spring.

In the case of the Cattleyas, be sure to grow *Cattleya gaskelliana*, because of its lovely rosy-purple flower in late summer and autumn. *Cattleya mossiae* has rose, crimson, purple, and yellow flowers from May to July and is well worth its cost. *Cattleya trianae* is in bloom from January to May, carrying dark purple and yellow flowers.

The great thing about orchid blooms is the time they last. An ordinary cut flower may keep only for a week in a vase, but a cut orchid has been known to last for two months. The great value, therefore, of an orchid plant is that it is in bloom for such a long time, and, though it may seem expensive to buy, it really is good value for money.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

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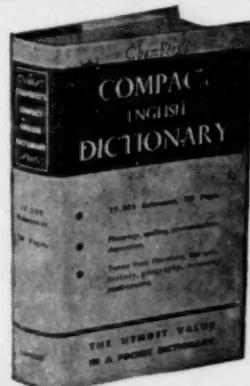
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ACROSS: 1, Arbailester; 8, Keech (*Henry the Eighth*, I, i, 55); 9, Axiom; 10, Hornie; 11, Slops; 13, Empale; 14, Classis; 15, Hassar; 17, Perrier (err, pier); 20, Carduus (*Much Ado*, III, iv, 73; Neville Cardus); 22, Samson; 24, Baldric; 26, Agnate; 28, Katie; 30, Beluga; 31, Indra; 32, Alien (Elian); 33, Cataphract.

DOWN: 1, Acalyphe (Ac-ale-pha); 2, Blimp; 3, Lamella; 4, So-ho; 5, Enrolled; 6, Seels; 7, Scups; 8, Kisses; 12, Oileus (oil, use); 16, Sea-bat; 18, Auricula (Dusty Miller, *Enoch Arden*, 367); 19, Antepast; 21, Dodeen (dud, evening); 23, Anguish (*Lydia Languish*); 24, Basle; 25, Liber (name given to Bacchus by Roman poets); 27, Ardea; 29, Kama (*Garden of Kama*).



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